

DRAFTS ON LA FITTE.—ANECDOTES OF THE STAGE.: (Concluded.)

"What has become of our old favourite, Grimaldi?"

"Joe seems to have retired to enjoy the *otium cum dignitate* which he so well merits: living, probably, on the glorious and unfading recollections of 'Mother Goose;' or reposing on the classical banks of the New River, his thoughts flowing with its current, until they mutually terminate at the scene of his earliest exertions and latest triumph, Sudler's Wells. How refreshing (as the blue and buff reviewers have it) are the associations connected with the mention of that prince of clowns! his vacant, yet joyous laugh—his admirable snifle—the ever-memorable *pas de deux* with Bologna!—what an increase to human pleasure did he afford! I fear me, young Joe will never attain to the buffoon glory of his chalk-faced sire. Three generations of clowns upon the same stage; and how many precedent generations elsewhere it would be hard to say."

"Is he not of Italian descent?"

"Yes;—I believe of Genoa. The first Grimaldi celebrated on the stage, appeared at Paris about the year 1735, when his athletic force and extraordinary agility procured him the sobriquet of "** Jambe de Fer.*" In the year 1742, when Mehemet Effendi, ambassador of the Porte, visited Paris, he was received with the highest honour and utmost distinction, and the Court having ordered a performance for the Turk's entertainment, Grimaldi was commanded to exert himself to the utmost to effect that object. In obedience to his directions, in making a surprising leap, his foot actually struck a lustre, placed high from the stage, and one of the glass drops was actually thrown in the face of the Ambassador. It was then customary to demand some reward from the personage for whom the entertainment was prepared, and, at the conclusion of the piece, Grimaldi waited upon the Mussulman for the usual present. If the Turk had concealed the expression of his anger at the accident, it was not however, extinct; for on the appearance of the buffoon, he directed him to be seized by his attendants, and transported in his theatrical costume to his residence, where, after undergoing a severe bastinado, the hapless actor was thrust into the street, with only his pedal honours for his recompense. He afterwards proceeded with the female who bore his name to Brussels, where having performed some time, he engaged with the manager of a troop of comedians, named Flahault, to go with him to Cologne. On their way they were attacked by a troop of fifty hussars (the country being then the seat of war). Flahault, who had been a schoolmaster, was a man of some learning, and attempted to induce the enemy to give him and his companions their liberty by an eloquent speech, which he concluded with the usual word—*Dixi.* The chief of the hussars, with more Latin than compassion, responded to the appeal by a sabre stroke, that wounded Flahault severely, in merely observing *Feci.* The capture of the troop was now determined upon, and would have been executed, had not the Signora Grimaldi, who was celebrated for her wit and humour, so worked upon its conquerors by her discourse, and elicited from them such genuine mirth, that not only did they grant them their liberty, but supplied them with some money for their journey. The Signora is reported to have been a very remarkable woman, but the relation in which she really stood to Grimaldi was never certain-

ly known, and it was said there was no less of consanguinity than of affinity between them."

"It is curious that another celebrated dancer, old Vestris, was, like the Grimaldis, of Italian origin. The father of Auguste Vestris, (denominated, by the unfortunate Marie Antoinette, "*Dieu de la Danse*"*) was a Tuscan, and acquired much reputation as a painter at Florence. Auguste had been so inordinately flattered by the Parisians, that he used to intrench largely upon the patience and forbearance of the public; and even on one occasion, when the Queen was at the theatre, restrained his son, (who had succeeded him as first dancer) on some trifling pretext, from appearing. This was going too far, and they were both arrested instantly by the police; when the sire stated in his excuse, 'that had his son known that her Majesty would have been present, he would not have failed to attend.' This apology, *a la mode de Rossini*, was accepted by the Queen, (the public were, of course, at that time out of the question,) and the younger Vestris exerted himself to the utmost, and with astonishing success, so that her Majesty could not help observing to the father, 'Ah! Monsieur Vestris, vous n'avez jamais aussi bien danse que votre fils l'a fait ce soir.'—'Cela est tout naturel, Madame,' replied the vain king of the pirouette, "car, n'en déplaise a votre Majeste, je n'ai jamais eu de Vestris pour maitre."

"Then there was Mrs. Charles Kemble, when Miss De Camp;—I trust she has not deserted the stage; for how pleasant is it to think upon her Lucy Lockit;—who can forget that shriek of joy on recognising the approach of the lover of her sister, from the tower in 'Blue Beard';—her dancing in the 'Forty Thieves';—but, above all, the beauty of form and grace of attitude she displayed on the pedestal in 'Cinderella.' The origin of the tale from which that pantomime was adopted is sufficiently curious. It was about the year 1730 that a French actor, of equal talent and wealth, named Thevenard, in passing through the streets of Paris observed, upon a cobbler's stall, the shoe of a female, which struck him by the remarkable smallness of its size. After admiring it for some time, he returned to his house; but his thoughts reverted to the shoe with such intensity, that he re-appeared at the stall the next day; but the cobbler could give him no other clue to the owner, than that it had been left in his absence, for the purpose of being repaired. Day after day did Thevenard return to his post to watch the reintegration of the slipper, which proceeded slowly; nor did the proprietor appear to claim it. Although he had completed the sixtieth year of his age, so extravagant became his passion for the unknown fair one, that he became (were it possible for a Frenchman of that day to be so!) melancholy and miserable. His pain was, however, somewhat appeased by the avatar of the little foot itself, appertaining to a pretty and youthful girl in the very humblest class of life. All distinctions were levelled at once by love; the actor sought the parents of the female, procured their consent to the match, and actually made her his wife.

"Charles Kemble gave at first but little promise of his present talent. It would be difficult to recognize in the gentleman and the scholar, and in one who excels in tragedy as in comedy, the 'very stick' that he certainly once looked; and I believe it was only by the strength of his name that he was endured at all, for he gave not evidence of taste or power, and it was as wearisome once to witness his performance as it is now delightful to behold the display of histrionic science he affords. Then as to Liston, it was really once a ticklish point whether he could make good his footing on the stage; and so totally had he or the managers erred, as to his talent, that the characters at first appropriated to him were those of dull and prosy old men. He chose too, for his benefit, on one occasion, 'Octavian,' and I believe it afforded the first indubitable evidence of his comic powers; although, at its conclusion, he assured the audience that he never would be so mad again. It was followed (if I remember well) on the same night by Poole's 'Hamlet Travestie,' wherein Matthews, as young Hamlet,—the lovely Orphelia, with her nosegay of turnips, carrots, and parsnips, by Liston; and Charles Taylor's ghost of Matthew's papa, (the best thing he ever did)—kept the house in a continual roar of laughter."

"But was it not d—d?"

"The audience would not permit that Shakspeare should be burlesqued; and perhaps it was the first piece on record ever condemned unanimously, amidst shouts of mirth and contentment. But the audience did right; the works of Shakspeare should not be so prophaned. That the performance was in bad taste, is the mildest censure due to such vulgar buffoonery."

* God of dancing.

† "Ah! M. Vestris, you never danced so well as your son has done this evening."—"It is but natural, Madam; for, may it please your Majesty, I had not a Vestris for my master."

* Iran-leg.

From the Monthly Review.

TIECK'S DRAMATIC CRITICISMS.

THIS work consists of a series of most judicious and valuable critiques on several pieces produced at the Dresden theatre. The author, the celebrated Ludwig Tieck, well known by his poems and tales, and who has devoted his attention for many years to the theatres and theatrical compositions of his own and other countries, enters into a close and critical examination of the pieces performed, and of the actors who represented them. The principles he lays down are so good, and his reasonings from them so judicious, that we feel no hesitation in strongly recommending the work to the attention of the genuine lovers of the drama in this country, as his observations will be found to apply with nearly equal force to our own as well as to the German theatre.

The German is, as is generally known, the latest formed theatre of Europe, except the Italian theatre of Alfieri. It had indeed an old mystery and morality theatre of Hans Sachs and others; but the Spanish and English theatres rose, attained their greatest elevation, and declined, before Germany saw any thing like the drama of real life and action. Its first attempts were made in the commencement of the last century, in slavish imitation of the theatre of the French, who at that time were diffusing the baneful influence of their literature over Europe.

The efforts of Lessing, one of the most clear-headed, sensible critics and writers that Germany has produced, were unceasingly directed against the French taste, and in the well known and admired Hamburg *Dramaturgion* he laboured unceasingly to bring back his countrymen to nature from the formal conventional theatre of France. Lessing was also a dramatic writer himself, and he was at first of opinion that the true language of the drama was prose: some of his earliest and best pieces were prose compositions; but his latter ones, such as *Nathan the Wise*, were written in rather a rugged species of blank verse. Goethe and Schiller gave in their master-pieces the true models of the species of verse suited to the German language and theatre; but, unfortunately, Schiller in his *Jungfrau*, *Marie Stuart*, and more especially in *Die Braut von Messina*, gave too much into the epic and lyrical style. His example has been followed

and carried to its utmost extent by Mallner, Grillpörzer, Houwald, and others of the present day, who have farther, by an ignorant and injudicious imitation of the Spanish theatre, introduced the trochaic in the room of the iambic measure into their pieces, and thus established a species of sing-song the most sickly, effeminate, and, to the ears of true taste, the most disagreeable that can be conceived. With this they have united the most improbable actions, and the most unnatural characters: a new kind of *destiny* also pervades their pieces, more inexplicable and more inimical to human happiness and exertion than that of the drama of ancient Greece.

Comedy also, which never flourished much in Germany, for

— *natio non comæda est*,

has been by Iffland and Kotzebue formed into a mawkishly sentimental domestic sort of affair, with wondrously kind, amiable, good-for-nothing personages figuring as fond fathers and mothers; good-natured, indulgent husbands, who lovingly take back to their bosoms a wife who has only been guilty of the slight indiscretion of going off and living with another man; and such other faulty monsters, which would to heaven our own theatre could plead innocent to the charge of having also employed in her service.

Against all this corruption of taste and degradation of rational and moral entertainment Mr. Tieck raises his voice in the present work, and we will lay before our readers some specimens of his criticisms, to enable them to appreciate his taste on dramatic subjects.

The principal pieces criticised are Kleist's *Prince of Homburg*, a play of which the critic expresses himself in high terms of approbation. The *Anna Boleyn* of Gehe, Schiller's *Wallenstein*, Körner's *Tony*, the *Zinngeisser*, taken from Holberg; the *Leuchthurn*, and *Der Fürst und der Bürger*, of Houwald; and *Romeo and Juliet*, Schlegel's translation of which was, with some alterations, most admirably performed at Dresden.

The *Anna Boleyn* is a very indifferent piece, but as it belongs to the new school, and as the reader may be gratified with comparing the plan of it with that of Mr. Milman's late drama of the same title, we will give from Mr. Tieck some account of it.

After a very faithful and accurate descrip-

of the period in which the scene is laid, and of the historical characters who were the principal actors in it, Mr. Tieck observes, that no more promising subject could present itself to a young poet, and then proceeds thus :

"If our young poet has been unable to employ much or even most of these materials, let this not be made any objection to him. It has been frequently maintained, that a young writer will succeed more easily in tragedy than in comedy, because the latter requires throughout maturity and experience. 'This prejudice can only proceed from those who have no insight into the essence of tragedy. No doubt a young person may easily treat any subject in a moving and sentimental manner, and excite sadness or even tears; but still he has not written a tragedy, any more than he who has put together a merry story in a droll manner has composed a comedy. The whole affair, when we look a little closer, comes to this, that mediocrity or deficient talent can, with the aid of a language already formed of traditional phrases, situations, and sentiments, which lie as it were coined to the hand, sooner produce something which is like a play, than that the same capacity could invent the ridiculous, for which at least some portion of humour is requisite.

"The play is divided into three acts, besides a prelude. In the latter, we learn the king's love for Anne, and his separation from Catharine, so that a space of three years elapses between this prologue and the play. 'This division is unhappy, for so much time is occupied with masques, processions, and superfluous pieces of description, which convey no more to the spectator than might have been done by a few verses in the piece.

"The charge made against Anne of illicit intercourse with her own brother is very properly omitted, the religious parties and their conflicts are kept out of sight, and Gardiner, who is Bishop of Winchester, is introduced as secretary of state. All this is well enough; but why, asks Mr. Tieck, is not Norris, one of the queen's servants, which would give probability to her too condescending intimacy with him? It is because the poet would then have lost the opportunity of making him a monitor, a perfectly disinterested personage, the friend and play-fellow of Anne's youth, and her first love.

"He ranges himself then under the banners of those lately-produced beings, who appear in so many of our new pieces, who only love, and will throughout do nothing else but love—who know no passion, scarce even a wish—who talk so nobly, so good-naturedly, and so magnanimously, and who, with my consent, may be excellent personages in real life, but who should be completely banished from the boards of the theatre. 'The Germans have often laughed at the confidants of French tragedy, because they are nothing else but mere confidants. But is not so consummate a lover, who neither hears nor sees any thing else, and who exhibits no other character, and no peculiarity, just as ridiculous?

"Norris dreads that the giddy, thoughtless conduct of the queen will be her ruin. He entreats for an audience, and this to tell her a

thing that he might have easily communicated at the first assembly. The queen, without any regard for decorum, appoints him, quite innocently, to meet her late in the evening in private, as the king is at the chase. But the king happens to overhear their discourse, and their fate is decided. The queen is sent to the Tower, where she thinks she is merely lodged previous to her coronation, and amuses herself playing with the crown jewels; and the poet indulges himself in a few trespasses against truth and history.

"Catharine of Arragon is still alive. In the prelude she promises an honest and faithful servant and friend, as she foresees evil days coming on, to request, as a last favour from Henry, some post for this worthy man, in which his mildness and gentleness may be of some advantage. And what post does the reader suppose is selected? The lieutenant of the Tower!! We must acknowledge that, for a soft-hearted gentleman, he had rather a curious fancy.

"Catharine opens the third act sitting among a set of children, whom she is benevolently instructing in female works. The haughty Catharine of Arragon! In Shakspeare, indeed, she is embroidering among her maids, but that is different from teaching children. This piece of little life (*Kienleben*), says Mr. Tieck, so sentimentally presented, and which has so often tormented us in Illand's pieces, is here most certainly out of place. The lieutenant of the Tower now appears, and brings various articles of news. First, Catharine may see her daughter Mary, from whom she has been long separated: she is overjoyed at this. But Anne Boleyn is in prison, in despair, and no one takes any concern about her. Catharine at once feels that it is her duty to go and comfort her, though by so doing she must give up seeing her daughter, as the permission was only for a few hours!! Here again is generosity upon generosity; false heraldry. Anne might have suspected that her former mistress would rejoice at her fall, and this consideration would, we might suppose, have withheld a person of delicate feelings from visiting her. But a trifle of this kind gives our young poet no concern. The good lieutenant's budget is not yet exhausted: the last and most important piece of news comes now. The king has carried off a beautiful maid, intending to make her his mistress, and the mother of the young lady had been Catharine's friend. The tragedy at this point actually gets into a comic situation, for the good-hearted queen is determined to save this innocent maiden from the rude power of Henry. The sentimental Henry had, it seems, lost his way in the chase, and in a retreat embosomed in trees he gets acquainted with this maiden. Instantly he falls in love, but he is excessively agitated when he hears that her name is Catharine. The real Henry, observes our critic, afterwards married Catharine Howard and Catharine Parr. In a few words, she of Arragon annihilates him: he surrenders to her his prey, and moreover gives her permission to visit the prisoners in the Tower.

"There must be here something perfectly unnatural in the play, and I am afraid that a

certain suspicion that immediately entered my mind is not without foundation. The king is in other respects a free agent; but this circumstance, his surrendering so cheerfully to the first Catharine the second of the name, almost without being asked, must have been his punishment and his fate.

"A very pretty tale might beyond doubt be written on the fates of *Fate*, from the time when Schiller first mentioned it in his *Wallenstein* and his *Epigrams*, how from that period it was forced to wind through the destinies of the *Jungfrau*, and to appear like a spectre in the *Braut von Messina*, was tortured in the *Schuld*, scarce survived the *Februarfieber*, was taken up exhausted and lifeless by the *Almfrau* and the *Bilde*, and in the present feeble composition will finally expire totally nerveless."—Vol. i. pp. 30–39.

The queen now hastens to the Tower, quite convinced of Anne's innocence. She consoles the sufferer, and learns from Dudley, that Cromwell, who is related to Norris, has given him permission to visit the friend of his youth once more. Catharine also consents to this, and they take their last farewell of each other before her eyes, and—the piece concludes.

The story of Anne Boleyn is not new to the stage, it had already been brought on both the German and English theatre, and Calderon has a piece on this subject, called *La Cisma d'Inglaterra*, which contains the divorce, Wolsey's fall, and the execution of Anne, treated in his usual manner, allegorically, adorned with prophecies, and with all the ardour of a zealous Catholic. His main object is the justification of the church from the charges brought against her.

"It may be asked," says our author, "what a historical drama properly is, and if it should never be permitted to depart from the real truth?—I shall have an opportunity to return to this subject, and to throw light on it from various sides. The French, who have made of tragedy a rhetorical piece of art, reject every subject near in time and place, as well as all reality: distant periods must supply their materials, and their critics, with great naïveté, determine, that a very remote, still better a tolerably unknown, country, such as China, Tartary, and the like, may, to a certain extent, supply the place of antiquity, and that, consequently, one may venture to bring on the stage even the modern history of these countries. To dwell on the subject of their native land, to invoke what is most elevated in the state, and in their own history, is for them not merely a matter of indifference, but directly confuses them. In this manner they have got their ideal, as they term it, of tragedy. When Shakspeare first became popular in Germany, several writers pursued quite a contrary course. They could not get casualties enough, which they newly stuck into their dramas, together with all the anecdotes and speeches just as they found them, and this crude beginning they termed nature. But if we look closer at the matter, we shall find, in these pieces, much common-place, unsuitable morality, cold reflection, and the like, which spring any where but from the tenor of their works. And again, every French tragedy reflects to us at least the

life of the nation, what its wish is, and what it strains after; and the perfectly modern sentiments contrast pleasingly enough with the pomp of the stilted language it employs.

"Shakspeare, the greatest dramatic poet, shows himself in his historical compositions to be the greatest of historic painters. As he is continually creating new forms, he does the same in his histories; each of his national plays is treated in a new manner, his *Roman* pieces again in another mode, and his *King John* is different from all his other plays."—Vol. i. pp. 42–43.

We now proceed to *Wallenstein*, the noblest production of the German theatre, and the finest drama that has appeared since the days of Shakspeare. Mr. Tieck's critique on this wonderful piece is extremely valuable, and it is greatly to be regretted, that, like his countrymen in general, he has the knack of enveloping the simplest and plainest notions in a mist of words, raised by the aid of the sorcerer Metaphor, which must, to common readers, and to those who are not expert in dispelling the cloud, and viewing things in their true form, be quite impenetrable. It is, we repeat it, greatly to be regretted, that the writers of so sincere and true-hearted a nation, should have given into a mode of writing so easily acquired, and which must, to the lover of simple truth, have so much the appearance of trick and paltry artifice. The fault certainly lies not in the language, for what writers are easier to be understood than Lessing and Wieland, and yet their sense is fully as profound as that of the Schlegels, or the present writer, or even Jean Paul, or the formidable Kant himself, the character of whose writings is most justly given by Mr. Dugald Stewart, though, fortunately for himself, he never underwent the misery of toiling through the works of the philosopher of Königsburg. To return to *Wallenstein*.

Nothing can be finer than the opening scene of the first part, the *Piccolomini*. Equally fine is the scene of the audience in the second act, every word has power, and the events of the preceding war, and its consequences, are set full in the view of the spectator. He feels himself transported back to that very period. The table scene is also deserving of high admiration, though Mr. Tieck thinks the art too manifest, in placing the servants in the foreground. This may be true, but the effect is fine, at least to us.

In the second piece, *Wallenstein's* death, the scene between *Wallenstein* and *Wrangel* is most highly praised by our critic. He also commends the last scene, though he thinks it excites in the breast of the spectator too much melancholy weariness of life, contempt of its magnificence, and doubt in all greatness and strength of character; "and certainly," continues he, "a tragedy which has selected this great subject, and which has been conducted with such strength, should not conclude with these feelings."

Every reader must have been struck with the extreme beauty of the scene in which *Therese*, the daughter of *Wallenstein*, appears; and, perhaps, few more powerful scenes are to be found than that between her and the Swedish captain, wherein she learns the particulars

of the fall of her lover, the younger Piccolomini. Yet Mr. Tieck regrets, and with reason, that Schiller should have mingled love and its tender idyllic scenes with the deep and awful interest of Wallenstein's mighty plans, and of the fate that seemed to impend over the whole of Germany. Thekla, however, is a beautiful creation, and we should fear to lose her, lest we might never meet her again. Perhaps her character is too romantic, but what heart can resist such tender melancholy as is expressed in

"Der Eichwald brauset, die Wolken zeihn,
&c."

"Schiller has exhibited no great variety in the creation of his female characters; this is precisely the point in which his weakness is most apparent. His heroines are all so thoroughly imbued with love, that in their lofty and noble passion, they appear invincible. On their very first appearance, they speak out so strong and so full, that there is scarcely any room for farther ascent. Hence with him love is a lofty species of intoxication, or a noble resignation, and in all these characters we rather hear the poet speak than nature. Strange that this very defect seems to be what has won him all hearts.

"The Amalie of his early piece, the *Robbers*, is altogether dithyrambic. Louisa in *Kabale und Liebe* is a perfect likeness of her. Leonora in *Fiesco* is nothing but a feeble image of the latter, because in this piece the plot and historical complexity prevail. The queen in *Carlos* is just as great, noble, and devoted; and even the most partial admirers of the poet could not absolutely deny, with respect to Eboli, and similar characters, that they are ill drawn. In *Thekla*, this idea of the female character, which should rather be called an abstraction than nature, expresses itself in the noblest manner. In *Marie Stuart*, the poet was compelled, by history, to give her more of truth, weakness and error, and she is, accordingly, his most successful female character. The extraordinary *Jungfrau* appears in the beginning awkward and strange, but in her incomprehensible love, she is again in the manner of the poet. It is just the same with the *Braut von Messina*, and the young lady in *Tell*.

"If it be said that in our greatest poet also, Clärchen and Margarethe, these wonderful creations have a similar physiognomy, nay even though Marian in *Clavigo* and in *Götz*, might in a certain sense be joined with them, as well as Mariane in the *Geschwister*; yet when we regard the pure *Iphigenia*, the Princess Leonora, and several excellent portraits, which appear to us in his minor pieces, as well as in his tales and romances, we must admire in them the rich creative gifts of the poet, as well as the truth in his forms, and the genuine female character in such various modifications. Our confused times, and the continually increasing wild anarchy, has made it necessary to bring to mind things like this, which might otherwise appear superfluous."—Vol. i. pp. 71-73.

A great fault in Schiller is, that he frequently gives sentiments and reflections to his per-

sonages which do not at all correspond with their characters, and which evidently belong rather to the reflecting poet, than to the acting personage, or may be more properly said to express the feelings of an anxious and interested spectator. This fault, like every other of this great poet, is least perceptible in Wallenstein, very much so in *Marie Stuart*, still more in the *Jungfrau*, and attains its acmé in the *Braut von Messina*. And these purplei panni, which adhere so loosely to the piece, and, as it were, fall out of it at once, are precisely those that are most admired, best remembered, and most often repeated. Schiller, in fact, if he has been the great raiser of the German drama, and the great assertor of its dignity, is also the man who has first contributed to its corruption, by laying the foundation of the present bewildered and immoral state into which it has fallen in the hands of Müllner and others, when he introduced *Destiny* (*Schicksal*) in so prominent a manner, and poured forth those lyrical effusions, so beautiful, but so alien to the genuine drama.

The drama, it is well known, terminates with the death of Wallenstein. Mr. Tieck thus proceeds:

"After the death of the hero, will the emperor miss him? Will the army remain the same? Will not the Swedes now, without opposition, command the country? With respect to all this, or even the fate of Octavio Piccolomini, we learn nothing, can guess nothing; and in this instance, as in so many other modern ones, the whole poem is closely attached to the person of one man; he falls, and all is over, without that being explained which so frequently demanded our attention in the progress of the work. It is concluded; but not finished. It, consequently, resembles many a building of antiquity, which was commenced on a large scale, but owing to hard times, and want of means, has never been completed."—Vol. i. pp. 79-80.

Our author's analysis of the *Leuchthurm*, in a dialogue between himself and a friend, is excellent. This is a drama of the new school, and a precious specimen it is; written chiefly in the trochaic measure, as easy to write as the ballad measure of *Marmion*, and confined to no more fixed rules. *Das Schicksal*, or *Destiny*, is predominant, the story is wild and improbable in the highest degree, the characters extravagant, and the general impression left on the mind is cheerless and disagreeable.

The article on *Der Fürst und der Bürger*, another piece of Hunwald, contains a great quantity of just and original observations on the different kinds of verse employed in the drama. The following are some of the author's remarks on the Alexandrine.

"The more ancient Alexandrine was one of the earliest measures employed in Europe, perhaps the earliest attempt at poetic expression, for no inquiries have as yet succeeded in discovering its first origin. Whether it only presented an imitation of the ancient trimeter, or that it took the place of the Latin hexameter, or (what appears to me most likely) that it was the musical accompaniment of the military dances of those valiant nations, and was an original invention; our old German

heroic songs are, for the most part, especially the *Nibelungen*, composed in this measure. The *Nibelungen* are distinguished from several other epic poems of the middle ages, more especially by the greater length of the fourth verse, so that the work arranges itself in strophes. The old Spanish *Cid* (the epic poem, not the romance, which Herder has made known to us), is in these earlier alexandrines, so also are the oldest French heroic poems, and in Italy also we meet this kind of verse, even in the thirteenth century, when even then it was called the Martellian verse. This measure is distinguished by this, that it has a female cesura in the middle, by which means it gains a syllable, but, at the same time, more freedom and variety. The French dramatists acted, beyond doubt, against their interest, when they placed the male cesura in the middle of the verse, and thus introduced that uniformity, and the beat of time, to overcome and conceal which cost the actor labour enough. They might have been induced to do this, in order to keep clear of the ballad-singing tone into which that more ancient species of verse had sunk, and into which it falls so easily, as we may see by numerous specimens of ancient popular stories, which have kept to this measure as an easy one. I would still, however, hesitate to say, whether, even in its older form, it be suitable to tragedy. In comedy it is excellent."—Vol. i. pp. 218-219.

Mr. Tieck is one of the greatest theatrical amateurs in Europe. He has made regular dramatic tours through his native country, has visited Italy and its principal theatres, is familiar with, though no profound admirer of the French stage, and finally, in 1817, was here in London, and beheld John Kemble, in the last of his performances. Mr. Tieck's opinions on the dramatic art should, therefore, have some weight, for he that has seen much is in general qualified to distinguish and appreciate.

The works of Shakespeare have long formed Mr. Tieck's chief study. He is as familiar with the language of our bard as any of us here can pretend to be, and he is now, we believe, engaged in a commentary and a translation of such of his plays as are not included in the admirable version of A. W. Schlegel. To such a man a visit to England must have held out many attractions. To see the land, and all its natural features, whence Shakespeare drew; to trace out the remnants of ancient manners that still linger amongst us; to witness the dramas of Shakespeare as performed on the national stage, were strong inducements. Mr. Tieck's enthusiasm, accordingly, was not satisfied by London; he made his pilgrimage to Stratford, gazed on the "soft flowing Avon," entered the venerable stream-encompassed church where repose the mortal remains of the bard, bestowed, we venture to say, his malediction on Mr. Malone's taste, in whitewashing the poet's bust, surveyed the humble edifice where Shakespeare first saw light, and, not the least instructing part of the pilgrimage, wandered through the venerable oaks of Charlot, that witnessed the deer-stealing exploits of the future dramatist. And many are the delightful associations awakened in the breast of the

reader of Shakespeare, in thus tracing the steps of the poet's youth; for numerous features still remain there unaltered, as steam engines and cotton mills have not yet banished rural manners and rural prosperity from Warwickshire.

The great, the important day of Mr. Tieck's first visit to a British theatre, was the 30th of May, 1817, when he repaired to Covent Garden, to see *Cymbeline*, the part of Posthumus by John Kemble. As the observations of a gentleman so versed in dramatic matters as Mr. Tieck, may be interesting and instructive to some of our readers; we shall give a few of his remarks on the different plays which he saw, and his opinions of the actors.

He commences his remarks on *Cymbeline*, by observing, that this play is one of the most various among the romantic works of the poet. Almost every thing that enchants in his other dramas, may be here recognised; and so impregnated with humour and irony, so filled with surprising events and extraordinary characters, that pleasure and pain, laughter and despair, encounter each other in the most wanton manner. He then proceeds:—

"That, owing to the length of the piece, and the incapacity of the performers, who could neither fill all the parts, and still less fill all well, I should not see the whole, and should see much of it but indifferently acted, I was prepared for; for we are accustomed to this, even in feeble pieces: but that in addition to this, no consistency and mutual dependence of parts should appear; that many, and among them the first scenes, should be totally devoid of even the slightest illusion; nay, that the actors should not even seem to comprehend that this should be aimed at; this, indeed, was what I must confess I did not expect. The whole was given more like a declamation-concert, in which some passages were delivered in an excellent, much in a pleasing manner, and a great—a far too great a portion pronounced in a most completely bungling style, without any attention being paid to the meaning of the poet, or even to the ordinary elegance of speech."—Vol. ii. pp. 135, 136.

With our present mode of adapting, as we are pleased to style it, the dramas of Shakespeare and others to the stage, Mr. Tieck expresses himself by no means satisfied. The old system of alteration, such as Dryden's of the *Tempest*, and Shadwell's of *Timon*, has, we know, been in a great measure abandoned; and the present mode is a system of amputation executed in the most arbitrary manner, totally heedless of consistency and of the meaning of the poet. The approved receipt is, to suppose a general knowledge of the subject, to leave the most celebrated passages as they are, to keep a steady eye on the chief performers, transposing passages, lengthening out the striking scenes by additions and dumb show and play, till one is tired, in return cut down other scenes, or omit them altogether, though they may be absolutely requisite for the perfect understanding of the piece. "In short," says Mr. Tieck, "they proceed in so violent a manner, that a stranger is at a loss how to reconcile it with that reverence and admiration which the English appear, on every occasion, to pay to their great poet."

When Kemble entered, he immediately, by his fine size and expressive countenance, reminded our critic of the celebrated German actor, Thierich Jacobi. Posthumus, as is well known, was not at any period one of Kemble's best parts, so Mr. Tieck saw him not that night to the greatest advantage. He thus describes him:

"His *organ* is weak and tremulous, but full of expression, and each word is given intelligibly and full of feeling, only that much too often and between every second and third word there comes a considerable pause, and most of the verses, or speeches, ended in a high key. In consequence of this immensely tedious mode of delivery, the piece, although, perhaps, nearly the half of it was omitted, was intolerably long. This, as one may call it, musical declamation, excluded all real acting, nay, made it, to a certain degree, impossible; for when every thing is so entirely directed to the little purpose of delivering every soliloquy and every description as to form an artificial whole, there can no longer be expected any delineation of character, any true gradation, any elevation or depression of this or that passage. Here and there the great master might be discerned; for example,—in the second act, when Iachimo, after his return, relates his good fortune, the despair mixed with indignation—the creation of new hope, and the falling back into despondency—were played and delivered admirably; and it became evident, that if Kemble had not given way to mannerism and a narrow school, he would really have been a great actor.

"In the Roman dress he appeared great, and in the burst of passion sublime. He knows well that this dress becomes him, and he knows how to wear it with ease and nobleness, and he therefore takes a pleasure in performing this youthful part, in which he, from beginning to end, never appears youthful."—pp. 138, 139.

Of Young's Iachimo he thought but little. Miss Foote's Inogene was charming in the eyes of our critic, though the audience did not appear to accord with him. He complains, that in England, as well as elsewhere, the prejudice prevails, that a deep and masculine tone is the one most suited to women in tragedy. The voice of the queen horrified him, and reminded him of several Italian actresses who employed those dreadful tones. Even in death, says he, Lear praises the soft and gentle tone of his Cordelia's voice. Shakspeare, though his female parts were played by boys, was of a different opinion from our actresses in this matter, and one should only recollect, what beauties Unzelmann Bethman (a German actress) developed in a tragedy, though her tone was always feminine, and could never descend to the deep base. His pleasure, on the whole, in the representation of Cymbeline, was not great; and he expresses his opinion, that it would have been performed much better, and much nearer to the ideas of the poet, on several of the German stages.

Mr. Tieck afterwards saw Kemble in Brutus; which character, he says, was not played, but judiciously declaimed. The celebrated scene of the quarrel between him and Cassius, made but little impression. Kemble's tone was too

weak for such scenes. Hotspur was as little to our author's taste; he compares the pause, the whine, the disproportioned accents on every second or third word, and raising the voice at the end of each line and sentence, to the protestant preacher, that might be heard in some provinces of Germany, preaching in this tedious, whining *tempo*. Kemble's Wolsey, he regards as a great piece of acting, hardly short of perfection; the scene with Cromwell, as excellence itself. "These admirable scenes," says he, "were given all through in such a manner, that every wish was satisfied, that the imagination could demand nothing more perfect, and that the admirers of the poet discovered new beauties in almost every verse. It is difficult to describe the enjoyment that results when a great poet and a great actor thus encounter." In the Hamlet and the Coriolanus of Kemble, Mr. Tieck perceived the usual beauties, and the usual faults of that great actor. In Coriolanus, as is well known, Mr. Kemble took leave of the stage; and the description of that memorable evening by our author, who was present, is extremely interesting, but has too little of novelty to be laid before the reader.

Kean was then in the zenith of his fame. He failed in pleasing Mr. Tieck, who, on the occasion of seeing his Hamlet, thus describes him:—

"I was very curious to see his Hamlet. All the gaiety, all the witty sallies, the sharp biting passages, were given by him in the very best tone of comedy. With the tragic portion of his part, he, to speak properly, knew not what to do. His mode of recitation is the very opposite of Kemble's. He utters every thing in a quick, frequently hurried manner, so much so, that the dignity of the subject suffers by it. With the accents and pauses he acts in a still more arbitrary and violent way than Kemble; he frequently too by dumb show, or stops, and artifices of that kind, gives to passages a different sense from what people have usually seen in them. His staring, starting, turning round, suddenly resuming with the greatest force a speech that he had apparently let drop, rapidly departing, slowly and unexpectedly returning—of all these epigrammatic modes of creating surprise, his play has the greatest superfluity; he is inexhaustible in inventions for thus breaking up his part into a thousand little frequent bons mots, tragic or comic; and it is undoubtedly this ingenious mode of, to a certain extent, altering and remaking the parts assigned him, that has won him the favour of the greatest part of the public, especially the ladies. If in consequence of this we are never detained by him, as is the case with Kemble, till we are tired, yet we are in requital, incessantly deceived and deluded, as if by an expert juggler, respecting the impression and the feeling that can with justice be counted on. All this falls out quite capriciously on the part of the player, with however the consciousness that he is making the language of the piece manifold, and introducing turns and jumps, for which neither the part, nor the poet, has in the great majority of cases furnished the slightest foundation. This, therefore, is playing with the play; and the poet, especially Shakspeare, is far more

completely destroyed by this mode, than by the former declamatory one."

After Hamlet, Mr. Tieck saw Kean in Macbeth. Here he was still feeblar than in the former part; and our critic makes an additional objection to him, that he, after the manner of the French tragedians, tears to pieces entire scenes with all his force, by pronouncing almost every word with the strongest accent, and the utmost effort he is capable of. We wish Mr. Tieck's observations on the witch scene, and the banquet when the ghost of Banquo appears, were not too long for insertion, as they might furnish some useful hints to our stage directors. Kean's Richard the Third, especially the dreaming scene, he liked not at all.

Mr. Tieck's opinions of other eminent actors, were these. Young, whom he saw in Othello, Falstaff, and some other parts, did not please him. Charles Kemble he liked. With Miss O'Neil he was delighted; he saw her in Desdemona, and in the Apostate. "The playing of the actress," says he, "dignified the text in so high a degree, that I count that evening among my most agreeable recollections." Booth was a bad imitation of Kean.

On occasion of Johnston introducing in the part of Major O'Flaherty, in the West Indian, a *favourite song*, Mr. Tieck makes the following curious remark:—"I understood but little of it—for though the English on almost every occasion speak rapidly and unintelligibly, these *javourite songs* are rattled out still more rapidly between the teeth. They frequently, indeed, clatter just like peas cantering down a tube—in this respect, (that of introducing songs,) barbarism is at its height in this country."

With the Haymarket, the only theatre in London that a good play can be seen in with any pleasure, Mr. Tieck was greatly delighted.

"It is," he observes, "a pleasant sensation to feel yourself, after the huge theatres of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, once more in a house of a size in which only it is possible to represent plays. On this more moderate stage, every thing fell into its proper proportion. We hear and see, and the spectator finds himself again one with the theatre. As in the large houses scarcely any one sees and hears all, every one feels dissatisfied."

Among others, Mr. Tieck makes the following observations upon our acting and our theatres:—

"One would hardly believe that the English, or their theatre, clung to ceremonies, which are so prejudicial to art and lively representation. I could not ascertain at what time these silly restrictions came in; it would be somewhat surprising if they existed so early as the time of Charles II., whose poets gave to the stage, pieces of the most licentious and indecent description. What is most injurious, is the air of stiffness and constraint, with which the players are found to enter and leave the stage. They may enter at the bottom of the stage, but must on no account presume to turn their backs on the audience; (our author should have made an exception in the case of *ghosts*; as he remarks, in Kean's Richard, that they appear to be privileged); hence they always make their exits sideways among the scenes. One should not find fault, as the large theatres

are tolerably wide, with their entering and retiring in general in this way, did it not cost all this trouble and anxiety, that they might be thus enabled always to present their full face to the spectator. On this account they approach each other with solemnity and constraint, slowly and after some speeches, then change places, and frequently step up to one another, just as if they were going to dance a minuet. In disputes, or in congratulations, or even in the dialogues between two lovers, they are endeavouring gradually to get near the side scenes, and each goes off, after having spoken his last word, with a side slip.

"In lively scenes, or in great events, for instance, when Richard III. gallops away to the battle of Bosworth, through the side scenes, with such short dancer's jumps, the effect is altogether comic."—pp. 155, 156.

This is in general very true, but we believe the rule is not so invariable as Mr. Tieck supposes, for we have occasionally seen the backs of other characters besides *ghosts*. He proceeds to observe on the theatres.—

"The two London theatres are like many now in Germany, far too large for the true lover of the drama; if one does not get into the boxes next the stage, or to the front of the pit, one sees but little, and that inconveniently. In consequence of the great height of the stage, the players dwindle to pigmies, and in the wide empty space there is no stay, no separation for individuals as well as for groups, no fixed point—by which alone, as in this desert space all is given without any frame, the play loses all real consistency. The height of the stage is somewhat moderated by the upper curtains hanging much lower than in our (the German) theatres; as they approach the bottom of the stage they sink lower and lower with every side scene, so that the back-wall is as low again as the first side scene. By this rapid descent the stage gains in comfort, and the excessive vacuity of the space is considerably diminished to the eye. In addition to this, which is also to be commended on account of the great breadth of the theatre, the second, third, &c., side-scenes come out much farther on the stage than with us, by which means the theatre is in this way also made much narrower, and the players are in some measure compelled to keep as much as possible on the proscenium. It is also very well contrived that the proper decoration, the back-wall, is so considerably diminished both in height and breadth by the side scenes protruding and the curtains descending so low, that it very frequently consists of two painted boards which are shoved out and join. This precludes a too artificial painting of the decorations, and throws the voice of the actors strong and full out into the house, whereas, in our mode of extending the stage, by the space between the side-scenes, by the quantity of canvas and the want of solid architecture on the stage itself, the voice is frequently, even in operas, weakened and obscured."—pp. 156—158.

Mr. Tieck shows in some other instances how we have exerted ourselves to overcome the disadvantages of our over-large theatres. But all our efforts are vain, the disadvantages are such as to baffle all attempts, and no true

lover of the drama would ever go to see any of our sterling plays at either of them, could he see them any where else. But monopoly, that bane of all that is good, seems resolved to deprive us for ever of one of the most national of enjoyments; and the admirers of Shakspeare and his brethren may look back with a sigh, to the days when at the Globe or the Fortune, their master-pieces were presented without undergoing the capricious mutilations of a modern playwright, and, though the playhouse might be covered with humble straw, Macbeth and Lear were better heard and understood than in the splendid theatres of Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Indeed, another conflagration were a consummation not to be deplored, could we hope to see rise from the ruins, three or four moderately-sized theatres and free trade in the drama.

Mr. Tieck expresses himself in a tone of despondency respecting the present state of the histrionic art, and certainly, when we turn our eyes over Europe, we find he has but too much reason for his complaints. In Germany, Schröder, Reinecke, and their fellows, are gone and have left none to equal them: Talma has just departed: our stage has lost its Kemble, its Siddons, its O'Neill, and it would we believe take the united strength of the two theatres to fill one of our best dramas adequately. The golden age of acting as of writing plays, seems to have past in every country. Our golden age in the former, Mr. Tieck says, was in the days of Burbage and Allen; he ought perhaps to have said those of Garrick and Henderson.

The reader needs hardly to be told, that the plays of Shakspeare are as familiar to the German boards as to our own. The translations of Schlegel are hardly, if at all inferior to the originals, and Lear, Hamlet, Othello, Romeo, may be seen to as great, perhaps greater perfection on the Berlin or Dresden stage as in London. In the present work Mr. Tieck criticises the German Romeo and Juliet, Lear and Hamlet. On the latter he has a long disquisition respecting the characters and some of the speeches. We shall impart to the reader some of his remarks.

No play of Shakspeare was so much admired as his Hamlet. The various characters of the prince, and the quantity of moral reflections (of the effect of which the popularity of Euripides is a sufficient proof), will easily account for this. But yet none of his plays, Mr. Tieck observes, was so frequently attacked even by his friends, and he thinks that it was Fletcher's object in his Philaster to give Shakspeare a gentle hint of how a prince deprived of his rights like Hamlet ought to act. The madness of Ophelia too was not understood, and Fletcher in another piece, "The two noble kinsmen," undertook the kind office of giving our bard another lesson respecting how young ladies disappointed in love should demean themselves. How far this may be true we take not upon us to decide, though it is not unlikely that Fletcher may be as innocent of intending to offend Shakspeare, as poor Ben Jonson was, whose name has, till within these few years, been synonymous with malignity and brutality.

The character of Polonius, Mr. Tieck says, and perhaps not without reason, has been in general misunderstood. On our stage he is a sort of buffoon, so also in Germany; our critic on the contrary sees in him a true statesman, politic and penetrating, always ready with counsel, who had been of consequence to the former king, and was almost indispensable to the present. The instructions which he gives his son are altogether those of a man well acquainted with the world; he mixes together important and unimportant matters, for to him both are alike. Every thing he says is excellent, and these noble words,

"This above all—To thine ownself be true:
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man"—

come from his very soul. Polonius' part in this scene should be given in the noblest and most high-minded tone, and only slightly tinged with the flat character of many men of rank. In the following dialogue with Ophelia, he pretends ignorance of his daughter's intimacy with Hamlet. He had heard it from others, forsooth. Thus, says Mr. Tieck, the sly courtier becomes quite apparent, for the visits to his own house could hardly have been unknown to him. But Hamlet visited there in the lifetime of his father, and after his death, while it was dubious on whom the election to the crown would fall; Polonius however saw by Hamlet's late conduct, in the second scene, of how little consequence, by his own fault, he was likely to be of in the court, and he therefore thinks it to be more for his own interest to keep the favour of the king; he, therefore, forbids his daughter to give the prince any more encouragement.—In this scene, says Mr. Tieck, the father also shows himself as a man who was well acquainted with the passion of love and its vagaries; he frequently says that he speaks from experience, and we must believe him, for this youthful passion of his own explains, why he remains so firmly convinced all through, that the prince is gone mad for love.

In the scene with the servant, which scene, like many others, Mr. Tieck observes, Shakspeare, whose works were certainly played without any division into acts, inserted to enable the mind of the spectator to regain some tranquillity after the horrors of the night, and to prepare for fresh exertion; in this scene, he says, when the directions of Polonius are considered carefully, they will be found to be any thing but those of a fool. Mr. Tieck examines them at some length, and then proceeds to consider all the other scenes, where he appears, and decides that his character has been hitherto mistaken. We will remark, *en passant*, that in the dialogue between Polonius and Hamlet, this passage occurs:—

"Excellent well, you are a fishmonger."

"Not I, my lord."

"Then I would you were so honest a man."

Mr. Tieck explains it thus: "I would you were so honest a man—but (understood)—you are a fleshmonger; you want to manage a meeting between your daughter and me:" which, he says, is justified by what Hamlet next says, "For if the sun," &c. Still, the idea of love

being the cause of the prince's madness is strong in the mind of Polonius: he minds not what Hamlet says, but proceeds; "He is far gone, far gone: and truly, in my youth, I suffered much extremity for love, very like this." "It has always grieved me," says Mr. Tieck, "when a player has pronounced these words in such a manner as only to excite laughter. It was certainly the aim of the poet to produce a melancholy smile by this retrospect of the old man's youth, and by the prospect that Hamlet, superior as he now appears to the old man in ingenuity, wit, and satire, should, when he arrived at the same age, exactly represent him."

Novel and startling as this view of the character of Polonius may appear, we cannot help regarding it as having some foundation, and it would be strange indeed if we were to be instructed in the true sense of our great poet by a foreigner. Yet, why not? Schlegel has, undoubtedly, pointed out many beauties, and explained many passages and characters in Shakspeare, who has not hitherto met with the best of English commentators. We, for our parts, are inclined to regard as a mere prejudice the opinion, that a writer's countrymen should understand him best. We doubt if any Italian has a fuller conception of the sense and the beauties of the great Italian poets, than Mr. Mathias; and we have long cherished a secret opinion, that Homer is better understood by the scholars of the present day, than he was by Aristarchus and his contemporaries.

"To be or not to be," is known to men, women, and schoolboys; and hitherto we have been unanimous in regarding it as a soliloquy on suicide. Mr. Tieck is of a different opinion. It is his own cowardice that Hamlet is arraigning; that, through the dread of falling in the attempt, withholds him from obeying the commands of his father's spirit, attacking the usurper, and contending with him for empire and for vengeance. Hamlet is, in Mr. Tieck's eyes, no hero; he exhibits weaknesses of every kind; his portraiture of himself to Ophelia is just; all the darker passions show themselves in him; revenge, anger, malice, envy, pride, and ambition appear in the strongest light; but so relieved and softened down by fine feeling, wit, taste, knowledge, and nobleness, that this amazing phenomenon attracts and enchants us. Even his repulsive qualities are not devoid of greatness and splendour.

The whole of the disquisition on Hamlet is highly interesting, as indeed is almost every thing in the work. The character of Ophelia is beautifully developed, and several of the observations are strikingly just and new; and we once more strongly recommend these volumes to the attention of such persons as love the drama, and are versed in the German language.

The latter part of the volume is composed of observations on the German theatre, occasioned by a tour which the author made through Germany, chiefly, we believe, with a view to the drama. The reflections on costume, decorations, and ballets, and the proper mode of delivering verse, are excellent; we recommend, particularly, the description of Mademoiselle George, whom he saw at Stras-

bourg as the mother of the Maccabees and as Lady Macbeth.

Arthur, or the British Worthy,) and a new Melo-Dramatic entertainment, bearing the somewhat undignified title of the *Cornish Miners*.

The former piece, if we mistake not, was moulted into its present form by that very skilful adapter of other men's ideas, Garrick, who reduced Dryden's five acts within the compass of three, and made other alterations calculated to render the Opera more effective on the stage, than its original construction admitted of. The lovers of our English classical writers need not be told, that a sweet, and, indeed, gorgeous vein of poetry runs through the entire of this Opera, the faults of which are to be extenuated, if not excused, by the consideration that the author, who wrote for bread rather than fame, generally wrote hastily, because his necessities were urgent. Dryden's poverty was pecuniary, not poetical. His wants, rather than his wishes, impelled him to dramatic writing—he mortgaged the unborn productions of his muse—sold his soul to the manager—in other words engaged to produce four plays in the year. In the songs of this Opera it seldom happens, that sense has been sacrificed to sound, and of the music, it is sufficient to say, that it is Purcell's, who, to use the words of Dryden himself, "has composed with so great a genius, that he has nothing to fear, but an ignorant, ill-judging audience." With such merits in the author and composer, we are well disposed to receive the present revival with favour; at the same time, that none can regret more than ourselves the necessity which exists, in our own lack of dramatic ability for drawing upon the more abundant stores of our predecessors. Every adaption and revival affords a fresh argument of our dramatic poverty, for—

"When old clipped money passes, 'tis a sign
A nation is not overstocked with coin."

The Opera has been got up with a considerable share of liberality in the articles of scenery, dresses and decorations, and the performers exhibit no deficiency of skill or exertion on their part. Miss Kelly, to whom the character of the heroine was justly allotted, sustained it with her usual force, and regard to truth and propriety.—The scene in which *Emmeline* is supposed first to attain the faculty of sight, was managed by the actress with a degree of truth, and effect, that went a considerable way towards neutralizing some of the ingenious, but unnatural conceits assigned to the character by the author, in his boldest and most interesting of the dramatic situations. Mr. Pearman sung very pleasantly as *Aurelius*; we may particularly refer to his execution of the fine martial composition from *Bonduca*. "To arms," in which he was powerfully aided by Mr. Atkins. The "Spirits of Earth and Air" fell into the hands of Mr. Thorne, whose sayings, singings, and doings, were characteristically ferocious: and Miss Goward, who "did her spiriting gently," and warbled delicately in *Philomel*.

The new Melo-drame of the *Cornish Miners* exhibits the following cast of characters:—

Hubert Kynan (a Master Miner)	Mr. BARTLEY.
Stephen Kynan (his Son)	Mr. BENNETT.
Trevallion	Mr. J. BLAND.
Michael	Mr. SALTER.
Hugh	Mr. SHERREFF.
Bobby Redroth	Mr. KEELEY.
Sal-Ammon (Village Doctor)	Mr. WRENCH.
Gillian (a Maniac)	Mr. O. SMITH.
Anne Oswald,	Miss GOWARD.
Dame Oswald, Mrs. Weston.	Dame Kynan, Mrs. BRYAN.

Stephen Kynan and *Trevallion* are rivals in the affection of pretty little *Anne Oswald*, whose mother has been robbed of the greater part of her property by *Gillian*, a maniac, who haunts the interior of the Polgooth Tin-mine, where he is pleased to pass for a ghost. His mental alienation, we are told, was occasioned by the sudden loss of his wife and only child. *Hubert Kynan* alone is aware of his existence, and benevolently supplies him with the necessaries of life. The first act closes with the occurrence of an accident in the Mine, by the falling in of a mass of earth and rock, while the majority of the *Dramatis Personæ* are below ground—and the second act is employed in digging them out again—a consummation that is considerably accelerated by the bravery and perseverance of the younger *Kynan* and his mistress, the latter of whom descends into the Mine in disguise, and very opportunely rescues her mother's plate, money, moveables and title deeds, just as they are on the point of being carried away from the place of their concealment—the maniac's den—by the rising of the subterranean waters. The maniac himself, who is a sort of human jackdaw, and has scraped together in his hiding place, a vast quantity of things which he can neither use nor appreciate, is swept away by the flood. All the other personages having escaped, *Stephen Kynan* and the heroine join hands amidst a chorus and general satisfaction. The comedy of the piece has been entrusted to Messrs. Keely and Wrench—of whom the former has become a miner through a love of nature, and the latter is a medical mischief maker, that does not confine his benevolence to the human species, but, on the contrary, boasts that he is equally skilful in his capacity of physician or farrier—a fact, to the accuracy of which, his patients, brute or human, can, no doubt, bear witness.

We shall only add, that all the performers exerted themselves to the utmost that their respective characters would admit of, and that both pieces were given out for repetition this evening, amid the general concurrence of the audience,—July 3.

The Drama.

Drury Lane Theatre.—In the dearth of any thing particularly novel touching our own theatrical concerns, it may not be uninteresting to say a few words of the condition of Drury-Lane under the superintendence of an American, an ex-manager of the Park. The season has closed, and report states it to have been by far the most successful for many years. At a meeting of the proprietors, some statements were made by the committee which are worth extracting. It appears that Mr. Stephen Price took the theatre under very disadvantageous circumstances. The committee pay him this compliment:—"Mr. Price, in thus taking the theatre, had many difficulties to encounter, but the favourable result of the season is the best proof of what the public and the proprietors have to expect from his judicious, spirited, and liberal exertions, to merit their support." He pays a rent of £10,605 (about \$50,000,) per annum, with a permanent deposit of £5000, of which £2000 is now, and is always to remain in advance of rent. The other £3000 are placed in trust, as a security for the due performance of certain covenants. Several gentlemen, (amongst others the chairman,) spoke warmly in praise of Mr. Price's management. It was objected, however, that he had excluded from free admission to the theatre, a class of persons having pecuniary claims, (called the New Renters,) on occasions of great attraction. Sir Thomas Turton expressed his determination, if he or his family should be so excluded, to bring an action against Mr. Price, and try the question in a court of law. In defence of the manager the sub-committee stated that it was in pursuance of their authority the restriction had been enforced. Mr. Price made a speech in which he denied that the free admission had been stopped in any way. He had merely ordered that those having the free admissions should not have the right of securing seats beforehand. He also observed, "seeing several Gentlemen of the Press in the room, he felt himself bound to deny, in the face of the public, that he had received 2,000*l.* for taking the contract off Mr. Bish's hands. He stood forward there, not as Lessee of the Theatre, but as a shareholder. The arrangement between himself and Mr. Bish was quite between themselves, and the sum which he received from Mr. Bish, was not given in consideration of his relieving Mr. Bish from his contract for rent in the Theatre, but for taking off Mr. Bish's hands certain contracts made by that gentleman with several performers—in consequence of which agreement with Mr. Bish, he (Mr. Price) was actually obliged to pay a salary of £400 to an actress who had played only eight nights through the season, and £200 to another performer. As to the assertion that he had directed the ladies of the new renters to go up to the higher circles, it was most unfounded—he never gave such directions—but there was one fact to which he wished to call the attention of the Meeting, namely, that the number of free admissions to the theatre, was no less than 618; these he was compelled to admit. The number of persons who could be accommodated in the dress circle was 260—in the first circle 240. If of these, then, he was compelled to admit to the dress circle, the great body of persons entitled to free entrance, how was it possible that he could pay the rent, or that the Theatre could be supported at all? He declared himself willing to enter into any reasonable arrangement for securing the privileges of the new renters. But, as lessee of the Theatre, he was bound to look in the first instance to the public for the support of the establishment. It was the public alone that enabled him to pay his rent to the Sub-Committee, to pay the salaries to the performers, and the very instalment of fifteen-pence every night to each of the new renters. He could never, then, consent to any measure that would tend to exclude that public from their seats, for the accommodation of 600 free and profitless admissions. [Hear.] It was finally agreed to re-submit the matter to the Committee.

ENGLISH OPERA-HOUSE.

This theatre re-opened, for the Summer season, last night, with the opera of *Arthur and Emmeline*, (an alteration of Dryden's *King*

BRIEF SKETCHES.

FROM NOTICES OF DISTINGUISHED ACTRESSES.

MISS CATLEY.

I AM now to speak (says Mr. Boaden) of one of those peculiar beings whom nature graces by some charm scarcely definable, by which all, however, are equally fascinated, and which they are destined to see pass away never to be replaced. I allude to the famous Miss Catley, who had a very brilliant and voluble execution, and executed the airs of Mandane, if not in the Italian taste, with great neatness and powerful effect. As to her person and countenance, she certainly had no striking characteristics of Mandane. Leoni was her Arbaces, whose falsetto had unrivalled sweetness, and Reinhold, a fine manly singer, and excellent musician, performed Artabanus. Comus was always a favourite after-piece with the manager of Covent-Garden Theatre. Catley, in Euphrosyne, was a Bacchante of the first order; and the song of Sweet Echo was added to her business, which Leoni in his falsetto echoed surprisingly. The Golden Pippin she immortalized by her Juno. The Jovial Crew, a worn-out pleasantry of a former age, revived in her Rachel, and the ballad opera existed in her attraction. To those who have never heard Miss Catley, I must, as my manner is, try to give some notion of what was peculiar to her. It was the singing of unequalled *animal spirits*; it was Mrs. Jordan's comedy carried into music—the something *more*, that a duller soul cannot conceive, and on which a feebler nerve dares not venture. Even at the close of her theatrical life, when consumptive, and but the ghost of her former self, gasping even for breath, and wasting her little remaining vitality in her exertion, she would make sometimes a successful attempt at one of her brilliant *rushes* of musical expression, and mingle a pleasing astonishment with the pain you were compelled to suffer. No other female singer ever gave the slightest notion of her; she was bold, volatile, audacious; mistress of herself, of her talent, and of her audience. But some conception of her brilliant impetuous style, may be formed by those who have been so happy as to hear Ambrogetti sing the *Fin ch'an dal vino*, in the master-work of Mozart, Don Giovanni. Voice he had little, but he had articulation and rapidity, that seldom are found together; his close shake before returning upon the subject, and seeming ease, though so exhausted as he must have been, remind me of his predecessor of a different school, nation, and sex; and Catley, if at all conceivable by the present age, will be only found in Ambrogetti.

MISS WALPOLE.

In 1779 Miss Walpole was married to Mr. Atkins, of Norfolk. That very charming woman quitted

the stage in consequence; and gaining the matrimonial prize, she certainly left a *blank* in the theatre. I shall not be suspected of any improper feeling, in what I am going to say, as if I repined at the rewards of merit in any profession, or, in the spirit of worn-out despotism, were for confining any talent to a particular sphere. I have heard of instances in which managers have considered female perfections as almost a property, and have ventured upon even rude expostulation with the intended monopoliser of their charmers. Perhaps the claim of the public may be yet stronger upon the skill which it has nourished with its applause. For my own part, I should think such unions miscalculated. In domestic life, with every splendour around her, the former actress must feel a languor, that at first may be taken for *ease*, but will soon be known to be *wretchedness*. Talent, whether it die away or not in its disuse, will want the frequent attestation to its pre-eminence to secure self-esteem. The new sphere demands the display only of common qualities—the former profession is for the most part by the proud mentioned with contempt, and remembered by her who has left it with a sigh. The independent has become dependent. A queen once said, “my drawing-room will become a green-room.” Had I been a great actress in the circle, I would have left it to its splendour, and have disdained to move about it upon sufferance.

MRS. JORDAN.

Certainly no lady in my time was ever so decidedly marked out for comic delight. She seemed as if expressly formed to dry up the tears which tragedy had so long excited, and balance the account between the dramatic sisters, which Garrick alone entirely succeeded to do in his own single person; for, although his friend Johnson preferred his comedy, yet his *Lear* stood unapproached in the records of tragic excellence.

The mark of this great actress had been made upon all the little caresses of female artifice, that inspire confidence, because they presume ingenuousness: all those sporting enjoyments of bounding youth, and whim and eccentricity; things that are usually done laughing, and provoke the laugh of unavoidable sympathy. Her sphere of observation had, for the most part, been in the country, and the Country Girl, therefore, became her own, in its innocence or its wantonness, its moodiness under restraint, or its elastic movement when free. Her imagination teemed with the notions of such a being, and the gestures with which what she said was accompanied, spoke a language infinitely more expressive than words—the latter could give no more than the meaning of her mind, the former interpreted for the whole being. She did not rise to the point where comedy attains the dignity of moral satire, but humour was her own in all its boundless diversity.

Of her beautiful compact figure she had the most captivating use; its spring, its wild activity, its quickness of turn. The redundant curls of her hair, half showing and half concealing the archness of her physiognomy, added to a playfulness, which, even as she advanced in life, could not seem otherwise than natural and delightful. But all this would have been inadequate to her pre-eminence, without that bewitching voice which blurted out the tones of vulgar enjoyment, or spleen, or resistance, so as to render even coarseness pleasing, or flowed in the sprightly measures of a joy so exhilarating as to dispel dullness in an instant: she crowned all this by a laugh, so rich and so provoking, an expression of face so brilliant, that the sight of her was a general signal for the most unrestrained delight.

We know that all this was merely the *imitation* of a reality—her delight must have been not in the part but its success—it could at most amuse her, and the twentieth repetition of the best written charac-

ter must be matter of business, and serious business too: yet there was no languor to betray the constraint of a prescribed task; her vivacity always characterized as fresh sparkling truth, and even life itself seemed hardly to be so natural as her representations.

Nor did her powers as an actress stop here; for, though the accomplished woman of fashion was not within her reach, and the heroine of tragedy was a mere day-dream of her youth, never to be realized, yet there was a power of tenderness about her, all but equal to her hilarity. I cannot say that the exterior indicated much sensibility; (I use the term in its restricted sense;) the charm was in an organ of amazing sweetness, which, when (as in *Viola*) it found a passage musically constructed, poured it upon the ear in a strain of singular melody. As to what may be called the grammatical analysis of a passage, by which the construction of it is forcibly marked, the clauses well detached from each other, and yet the *whole* meaning bound together—there was no effort of the sort; the words streamed on from the beginning to the close—it was a land “flowing with milk and honey,” and neither had nor appeared to need the cultivation of art. But delightful as her voice was in speaking, it showed its quality with rather increase of effect, when, as she frequently did, she introduced any ballad story, serious or comic, to a common air, unaccompanied by the band. The effect of these voluntaries cannot be described, nor did I ever hear any thing like them. She would begin often in one key, and end in another; but every key to her unlocked the avenue to the heart.

MRS. STEPHEN KEMBLE.

The stage never in my time exhibited so pure, so interesting a candidate as Miss Satchell. Her modest timidity—her innocence—the tenderness of her tones, and the unaffected alarm that sat upon her countenance, won for her at once a high place in the public regard, which she cultivated long, and extended, under the appellation of Mrs. S. Kemble. This young lady carried, into a family abounding in talent, powers of so peculiar a kind, so perfect, so unapproachable, that, if they were inferior as to their class, they shared a kindred pre-eminence. No one ever like her presented the charm of unsuspecting fondness, or that rustic simplicity which, removed immeasurably from vulgarity, betrays nothing of the world's refinement, and is superior to its cunning. *Double entendre* in her presence had nothing beyond the *single* sense that might meet the ear of modesty. I have often listened to the miserable counterfeit of what she was, and would preserve, if language could but do it, her lovely personation of artless truth. But it may be gathered critically in its *abstract*, by the negative assistance of many of its modish imitations. The fancy may restore her, or be contented at least with its own creation. That of Steele, in one of its softest inspirations, first saw her about the year 1674, on the continent of America, fondly bending over a young European, whom she had preserved from her barbarous countrymen; she was banqueting him with delicious fruits, and playing with his hair. He called the vision *Yarico*. Chateaubriand, a century after, beheld it with additional charms, and named it *Atala*.

The Drama.

LONDON THEATRICALS.

Drury Lane.—Mr. Macready's *Hamlet*.

We turn with pleasure to that which, of all the performances of the month, most provokes and deserves criticism—the *Hamlet* of Mr. Macready—a performance so full of questionable points and unquestionable beauties, that we heartily wish we had nothing else to notice. As a piece of mere tragic acting—as the representation of the Prince, affected by the death of a beloved father, the heartlessness of a mother, and the loss of a crown, who is haunted by the ghost of that father, disclosing that the usurper is his murderer, and goading the son to revenge, it leaves nothing to be wished for. The first scene with the Ghost; the passionate soliloquy with which the second act closes; the play scene, and the closet scene, are individually as passionate, as picturesque, and as true as any thing we have seen on the stage for many a year, and are certainly deepened in colouring since he played them before he quitted England. But he seems to us less happy in the level passages—in the poetry and philosophy of the part—which yet by his acquirements and tastes he should be peculiarly fitted to give. We miss the princely gentleness, the beautiful relapse from individual grief into general and abstract musing, the gleaming sense of pleasure and social regard with which the rigour of the destinies is occasionally beguiled, as on the first meeting with Horatio, and in the prospect of renewing the old theatrical enjoyments; and the tones which should give fit expression to those stray gifts of wisdom which are strewn plentifully through the lighter scenes. That this forbearance to allow due prominence to the plaintive beauty of the part proceeds from no indifference to that beauty, we are assured; we attribute it partly to long familiarity, and partly to a despair of entirely embodying the intellectual part of the poet's creation;—but the effect is extremely prejudicial to our gratification, and peculiarly unfortunate for the artist's fame—because no one can feel poetry more truly, or speak it more delightfully. In general, then, we think, with the splendid exceptions to which we have referred, and the exception also of the scene with Ophelia, which is played best when made least of, that he acted the part with too great rapidity and too frequent abruptness. If *Hamlet* would be greatly improved to our feelings by the addition of at least half an hour to the time which it now occupies. We offer these suggestions with diffidence, because Mr. Macready acts from thought as well as impulse; but it seems to us that, in sacrificing so much to passion, he is at present doing the finest half of his capabilities injustice.

THEATRICALS IN PARIS.

There was an extraordinary representation at the Opera-Comique on Thursday, the 6th instant, for the benefit of Huet, a veteran *artiste* of this theatre. His bill of fare announced entertainments most delightfully varied, and of the highest order; and this proof of anxiety to deserve the favour of the public, combined with his length of service, fully entitled him to the very liberal patronage he received. Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Berri, and the Duke of Orleans and his family, were present; and, in fact, the audience was altogether one of the most fashionable and brilliant I have ever been fortunate enough to see, comprising, as it did, all that is distinguished in the financial, literary, and court circles. The splendour of the braids and bracelets, dresses and diamonds (to say nothing of bright eyes), was positively dazzling. The ladies, contrary to custom, went in full dress, and so enchanting was the effect, that I could not avoid breathing forth a wish that it were thus always; for I think of the captivating coquettish little Françaises as cockney aldermen do of *Vénuses*—that they ought never to appear except *en grand tenue*.

At seven o'clock the amusements of the evening commenced with the comic-opera, *Picaros et Diego*, in which Ponchard, that sweetest of warblers, inspired all those having the least pretensions to ears and souls with a feeling of the most lively pleasure. The two concluding acts of *Romeo and Juliet* were performed next. To adopt the French idiom, Miss Smithson bore away all the suffrages. *Valerie* followed. It was played with delightful *ensemble*, by Mademoiselles Mrs. Dupuis, Armand, Firmin, and Monrose. Both the last mentioned pieces were received with great applause, and it was generally remarked, that “the pearl of France,” had never before acted *Valerie*, or the English-woman *Juliet*, half so well. Next in order came a *builetto de circonstance*, called *La Reunion des Artistes*. The name sufficiently announces that the only end proposed in this little affair was to allow a number of *artistes* to exhibit their kindly feeling towards the *beneficiare*, and make their bow to the audience. It was, however, rife with interest alike to the idle thoughtless gazer and to the philosopher. The display of splendid fancy dresses afforded matter of wonderment to the one, while the assemblage of so many individuals, distinguished by their talent, could not fail to furnish an agreeable subject of contemplation to the other.

Among the crowd of *artistes* now in their noon of fame, were to be seen Chenard, Le Sage, and several others, prime favourites in their day, who wisely following the advice, “*Solus scenscentem equum*,” had retired before age had robbed them of a single laurel. They were warmly and loudly greeted as they came forward by the audience; but the cheering assumed a higher and more enthusiastic tone, when the principal *artistes* of the theatres Français and Anglais advanced together, Armand leading Miss Smithson; Abbot, Mademoiselle Mrs.

NEW YORK THEATRICALS.

The Park.—Mrs. Sloman's Benefit on Monday was well and fashionably attended, and her performance in the *German Dances* met

was a cuaste and intellectual effort, combining much force, energy, and discretion, which left upon the minds of the audience a strong and favourable opinion of her powers. On Wednesday she repeated *Isabella*. This part is the best in which we have seen her; the preservation of the character throughout is complete, and there are very many passages which she executes with uncommon skill and effect.

Mrs. Hilson re-appeared on Tuesday, after a long indisposition, in the part of *Julia*, in the *Gambler's Fate*; she was greeted with a welcome that clearly indicated how firmly she is established in the public favor. We shall have occasion to speak of her acting hereafter.

The Courier of Naples, a new dramatic piece, was produced at this Theatre on Thursday—we shall probably analyze it next week.

Mr. Horn, we understand, is busily engaged in composing an Opera, which will probably be produced at the Park early in April. Towards the close of the present month, it is understood that Mr. Poorman and Mrs. Austin will be again in town, when, in company with Mr. Horn, *Artaxerxes* and several other operas will be again presented to the New York public. These performances, we are given to understand, will be got up with great care, and the salutary practice of rehearsing will be carried to its fullest extent. Mr. H. has for the present abandoned his journey to the south, the preparations for the pieces about to be brought forward necessarily requiring his constant presence in town.

The Bowerly—Very good, and substantial attractions continue at this house. Miss Rock, Mr. Forrest, and Mr. Holland, are strong cards, and are played with much skill by the Managers. Mr. Forrest, although repeating his usual characters, still draws good houses, repetition, indeed, does not, with him, produce its usual cloying effects upon the audiences, for he has a multitude of friends and admirers, who nightly go to see him acting, and who could only be drawn thither but by the conviction of his excellence as a Tragedian. As his personation of those different parts have heretofore been spoken of in the *Albion*, it is not necessary to advert to it again, further than to say, that he sustains, well, his former reputation, and that his acting abates nothing of its early freshness and vigor.

Mrs. Giffert appears occasionally, and always receives that approbation which her merits as an actress so eminently entitle her to.

The Chatham Theatre, we regret to say, is again closed; preparations, however, it is said, are making to re-open it under advantageous circumstances.

The French Dancers meet the most decided success in Boston; and such is the fascination produced by their beautiful art, that Mons. Achille has been obliged to make an appeal to the generosity of the public against the constant practice of *encoring*. This is rather a singular circumstance, and says very little for the code of morality attempted to be established by a certain class of people in this city some time ago.—The following is the Appeal alluded to, which we copy from the Theatrical Advertisement in the Boston Statesman:—

“The Dances composed by Mons. Achille are accompanied by so much fatigue, that a repetition of them on the same evening is attended with great danger of injury; as such a result would not contribute to the pleasure of the public, and be seriously detrimental to the Dancers. It is their earnest request that the Public will not insist upon performance of that, which might eventuate in a loss of the power to pursue their profession.”

ORIGINAL STORY OF HAMLET.

FROM THE LATIN OF SAJO GRAMMATICUS, BUT INTERSPERSED.

FLORWENDILLUS, king of Jutland, married Geruthra, or Gertrude, the only daughter of Ruric, king of Denmark. The produce of this union was a son, called Amlethus. When he grew towards manhood, his spirit and extraordinary abilities excited the envy and hatred of his uncle, who, before the birth of Amlethus, was regarded as presumptive heir to the crown. Fengo, which was the name of this haughty prince, conceived a passion for his sister-in-law, the queen; and meeting with reciprocal feelings, they soon arranged a plan, which putting into execution, he ascended the throne of his brother and espoused the widowed princess. Amlethus, (or Hamlet,) suspecting that his father had died by the hand or the devices of his uncle, determined to be revenged. But perceiving the jealousy with which the usurper eyed his superior talents, and the better to conceal his hatred and intentions, he affected a gradual derangement of reason, and at last acted all the ex-

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travagance of an absolute madman. Fengo's guilt induced him to doubt the reality of a malady so favorable to his security; and suspicious of some direful project being hidden beneath assumed insanity, he tried by different stratagems to penetrate the truth. One of these was to draw him into a confidential interview with a young damsel, who had been the companion of his infancy; but Hamlet's sagacity, and the timely caution of his intimate friend, frustrated this design. In these two persons we may recognise the Ophelia and Horatio of Shakspeare. The second plot was attended with equal want of success. It was concerted by Fengo that the queen should take her son to task in a private conversation, vainly flattering himself that the prince would not conceal his true state from the pleadings of a mother. Shakspeare has adopted every part of this scene, not only the precise situation and circumstances, but the sentiments and sometimes the very words themselves. The queen's apartment was the appointed place of conference, where the king, to secure certain testimony, had previously ordered one of his courtiers to conceal himself under *a heap of straw*; so says the historian; and though Shakspeare, in unison with the refinement of more modern times, changes that rustic covering for the royal tapestry, yet it was even as Saxo Grammaticus relates it. In those primitive ages, straw, hay, or rushes, strewed on the floor, were the usual carpets in the chambers of the great. One of the Henrys, in making a progress to the north of England, previously sent forward a courier to order *clean straw* at every house where he was to take his lodgings. But to return to the subject.

The prince, suspecting there might be a concealed listener, and that it was the king, pursued his wild and frantic acts, hoping that by some lucky chance he might discover his hiding place. Watchful of all that passed in the room, as he dashed from side to side, he descried a little

movement of the uneasy courtier's covering. Suddenly Hamlet sprung on his feet, began to crow like a cock, and flapping his arms against his sides, leaped upon the straw; feeling something under him, he snatched out his sword and thrust it through the unfortunate lord. The barbarism of the times is most shockingly displayed in the brutal manner in which he treats the dead body; but for the honor of the Danish prince, we must suppose that it was not merely a wanton act, but done the more decidedly to convince the king, when the strange situation of the corpse was seen, how absolutely he must be divested of reason. Being assured he was now alone with his mother, in a most awful manner he turns upon her, and avows his madness to be assumed; he reproaches her with her wicked deeds and incestuous marriage; and threatens a mighty vengeance upon the instigator of her crime.

In the historian we find that the admonitions of Hamlet awakened the conscience of the queen, and recalled her to penitence and virtue. The king, observing the change, became doubly suspicious of the prince; and baffling some preliminary steps he took to vengeance, Hamlet was entrapped by him into an embassy to England. He sent along with him two courtiers, who bore private letters to the English monarch, requesting him, as the greatest favor he could confer on Denmark, to compass, by secret and by sure means, the death of the prince as soon as he landed. Hamlet, during the voyage, had reason to suspect the mission of his companions; and by a stratagem obtaining their credentials, he found the treacherous mandate; and changing it for one wherein he ordered the execution of the two lords, he quietly proceeded with them to the British shore. On landing, the papers were delivered, and the king, without further parley, obeyed what he believed to be the request of his royal ally; and thus did treason meet the punishment due to its crime. The daugh-

ter of the king being charmed with the person and manners of the foreign prince, evinced such marks of tenderness, that Hamlet could not but perceive the depth of his conquest. He was not insensible to her attractions; and receiving the king's assent, in the course of a few days led her to the nuptial altar. Amidst all joys, he was, however, like a perturbed ghost that could not rest; and before many suns had rose and set, he obtained a hard wrung leave from his bride, once more set sail, and appeared at Elsinour just in time to be a witness of the splendid rites which Fengo (supposing him now to be murdered) had prepared for his funeral. On the proclamation of his arrival, he was welcomed with enthusiasm by the people, whose idol he was, and who had been overwhelmed with grief when Fengo announced to them his sudden death in England. The king, inflamed with so ruinous a disappointment, and becoming doubly jealous of his growing popularity, now affected no conciliation, but openly manifested his hatred and hostility. Hamlet again had recourse to his pretended madness, and committed so many alarming acts, that Fengo, fearing their direction, ordered his sword to be locked in its scabbard, under a plea of guarding the lunatic from personal harm. After various adventures, at last the prince accomplished the

death of his uncle's adherents, and vengeance on the fratricide himself, by setting fire to the palace during the debauch of a midnight banquet. Rushing in amidst the flames, he kills Fengo with his own hand, reproaching him at the moment with his murder, adultery, and incest. Immediately on this act of retribution he was proclaimed lawful successor to the throne, and crowned with all due solemnity.

Thus far Shakspeare treads in the steps of the annalist; the only difference is in the fate of the hero; in the one he finds a kingdom, in the other a grave. Saxo Grammaticus carries the history further; and after the crowning of Hamlet as king, brings him again into Britain, where, in compliment to that land of beauty, he marries a second wife, the daughter of a Scottish king. Hamlet brought both his wives to Denmark, and prepared for a long life of prosperity and peace. But the sword hung over his head; war burst around him, and he fell in combat by the hand of Vigelotes, son of Ruric. Saxo Grammaticus sums up his character in a few words: "He was a wise prince and a great warrior. Like Achilles, he had the principal actions of his life wrought on his shield. The daughter of the king of Scotland casting her eye on it, loved him for the battles he had won, and became his bride."

From Blackwood's Magazine.

THE CAUSES OF THE DECLINE OF THE BRITISH DRAMA.

—"Why, this was known before—
Not to them all."——*Coriolanus.*

Is the treatment of things trite there is a peculiar difficulty. The decline of the British Drama has been so evident—so notorious and palpable—to any one who has lore enough to compare the healthy productions of our ancestors with the rickety offspring of modern times—that one feels inclined to apply for a solution to physical causes alone, leaving out moral considerations as too evanescent to account for effects so glaringly obtrusive. Melpomene, in short, is in the last stage of a consumption, with strong hectic symptoms; and Thalia in a tabes, inclining to the dropsical. This is the best account that can be given of the matter; and if Doctor Paris or Mr. Abernethy is of a different opinion, let him publish his bulletin accordingly. In the history of the complaint there is nothing new. The prognosis is easy enough. The sisters were respectable and amiable spinsters in Queen Elizabeth's time. They unluckily for themselves got into habits of familiarity with that insinuating debauchee, Charles the Second. From him they learned to take more stimulus than is proper for well educated young ladies. They talked French, kept late hours, and company none of the most reputable. Such conduct could only have one end. Loss of character kept pace with increase of style, until, in a series of years, both got into that equivocal situation, to which less delicate minds might perchance be inclined to apply a term too coarse for the pages of this magazine. Ill-got affluence is never permanent. Overgrown incomes were followed by overgrown establishments, and overgrown establishments by all manner of luxury. The consequences were soon evident. Great houses and multitude of servants brought many guests and many tastes. Every thing was gradually turned topsy-turvy. The old plain household economy was exchanged for high French dishes, drams, and extravagance. A bloated body soon became the sure argument of a depraved appetite. False appetite is but the forerunner of dyspepsia. As the stomach waxed weak, the peppering grew stronger. At last the patients could digest nothing, and retain little. It was in vain, like the King of Prussia in *his* dropsy, to set disease at defiance, and eat "hot eel-pies."—"E'en dismissing the doctor don't *always* succeed." Hydrothorax and phthisis supervened, and the sisters are now gasping under the triple evils of ill taste, ill cooks, and too much money. As for their applications to the quacks to *tap or bleed them*, it would be merely putting them to useless pain. The water would soon accumulate again, putting aside the risk of mortification or hemiplegia; and this is the medical account of the matter. Under a critical system, the three causes of the decline of the English Drama range under three heads,—Ill Taste, Ill Criticism, and Monopoly—*Ill taste* as to the draw-

ing of character, *Ill criticism* as to style, and *Monopoly* as to representation.

Most men are, some time or other, induced to read occasional sermons, or moral discourses, or philosophical dissertations, or treatises on ethics, or something in some shape or other, pretending to treat of the human mind or character. Now, be the books good or bad, every body will recollect that they all agree in one point, and that is in a general bewailment of the "*inconsistency*" (as they call it) of human nature. They complain that there is always something (call it infirmity, or what you will) which contrives to set a man's doings by the ears with each other, and seems to take a delight in making him go to buffets with himself, and contradict himself to his own face. This is all very well, and very true—and as the drama professes to be an imitation of human nature, one of course looks to find the same thing there, better or worse portrayed, as may happen. Hearing, as one does, such a loud talk from all manner of theatrical people—authors, players, critics, managers, scene-painters, and candle-snuffers, about "holding a mirror up to nature," and "*veluti in speculum*," and such like phrases, one naturally looks to see, at the very worst, a bad imitation of this self-same inconsistency, which the moralists have been making such a fuss about. Not seeing this, one naturally, as the next step, inquires about it—the which inquiry lets us into a bit of a secret, viz. *that stage character is one thing, and human character another*—a fact, which if a man happens to be of a considerate disposition, has an effect upon him pretty much like that produced by suddenly running his nose, in the dark, against a post—a sort of diruption of his preconceived ideas, a sudden break of the strata, which, whether he be metaphysician or geologist, is not a little embarrassing. In such an unexpected strait what can a man do, but even take to his books, and try "the faculties" again? Accordingly, he reads, from Longinus downwards, all manner of critical dissertations, the jet of which is, to take him by both elbows, and, pinning them close down to his sides, make him wheel, at once, to the right-about, so that the "*Nasum aduncum*," which just before looked due west, turns directly the other way,—plain east,—point blank to the opposite quarter of the compass.

Instead of the inconsistency of the human character, he now hears of nothing but its consistency. He is told of this and that (at every turn,) outraging that or the other—of keeping—of propriety. In plain terms, he learns, that though Elwes the miser, in real life, used now and then to do generous things;—though even Garrick himself was, at times, liberal, until he got frightened by the ghost of a farthing, which met him at the door of a snuff-shop,—nevertheless, your stage miser is to think of nothing but his money. Where he to show a tittle of generosity, be the occasion what it might, the critics would at once arraign him of inconsistency. They would tell the author he absolutely knew nothing of what they, in their jargon, call "preservation of character." No, forsooth! it would not be "in keeping." It would be a violation of "colouring, of costume, of probability"—Psha! In like manner, though, in reality, your Cromwells were kind-hearted men to their relations and familiars; and your Napoleons beloved by their servants, military and civil, yet all this is to go for nothing in a theatre. Your

stage heroes and tyrants are to be heroes and tyrants *out-and-out*; to the world, as well as their valets-de-chambre, talking nothing but "fire, smoke, and bounce"—lapping blood—drinking gin and gunpowder;—in short, perfect crystallizations of hard-heartedness. After the same rule, your stage lovers are to do nothing but sigh, to have nothing in their mouths but "Ah, me!" nothing on their stomachs but wind, nothing in their pockets but billets-doux. Your stage mothers are, evermore, to have an infant in one hand, and a white pocket-handkerchief in the other. Your stage ruffians are to be ready, at a minute's notice, to stab, rob, and ravish man, woman, and child, without provocation or remorse. Your stage fops are to be, *ad infinitum*, silly in stays, puppyish in pantaloons, and blackguard in buckskins; and your stage jockeys, all the three at once, in a swell hat, Belcher handkerchief, white upper toggery—boots, spurs, and a switch.

This is poor work. Whoever has had observation enough to mark human nature, even in her commonest phases, must know, that even to the most purblind metaphysics, this sort of "consistency" is mere stuff. The fact is, that nine times out of ten, humanity is the reverse of consistency, in the common acceptation of the word, and now and then so in any sense of it. There are few general rules which are true of human conduct; so few, that, on reflection, one is astonished there should not be more. The best explanation, indeed the only one, is to account for actions by arguing from passions, opposite in their nature, but co-existing in the same individual. Of these, sometimes one, sometimes another, has the mastery; for, as to the doctrine of a "ruling passion," that, whatever Lord Bolingbroke might think of it, is mere nonsense. It is contradicted by all experience. If men's doings were regulated by one wire, we should have much less trouble than we have. The truth of the matter is, that there is no such thing as a predominant passion in this sense. The strongest passions of men are perpetually opposed, neutralized, and turned aside by others.

He who feels himself entangled in the meshes of some besetting sin, every now and then, like a blue-bottle in a spider's web, makes a desperate attempt to flounder out of it. He who is, as he thinks, most firmly seated on a virtue is, generally, when he least thinks of it, cheated in his most praiseworthy attempts, (holding by mane and crupper,) not to be kicked off upon occasion. Well for him if he has patent stirrups. Thus, do we not, every day, see shabby fellows of all descriptions, attempting, by some convulsive effort of ostentatious expense, to redeem themselves from the conscious stigma? Devoted lovers, every warm July, going near to turn out "perjured men" and "treacherous wretches?" Duellists, getting nervous, after supping upon lobsters, and coming off "second best," with an "*explanation*" on a frosty morning? Respectable matrons of forty-three, who have had four children, running away with whey-faced ensigns of nineteen, turned up with green? Old bachelors of seventy-eight marrying girls in their teens; and, equipped in Wellington pantaloons and stays, giving their congratulators wine at two in the morning? "Saints" getting *into trouble* with their housekeepers, or indecorously tipsy at vestry meetings; and high-bred young ladies, who play upon the harp and talk Italian, sneaking off to country churches with small tradesmen, who cannot talk at

all except behind the counter, or play upon any thing but their customers? Now these, God wot, are all inconsistencies, but all strictly natural; inasmuch as they chance, upon an average, to happen, about every other day through the week.

It is this opposite play of the passions—this crossing of the currents of mind—which constitutes the charm of Shakspeare's characters, and of the *successful* characters of other dramatists. Hamlet is, probably, the finest dramatic character that ever was drawn. But he is so, not because he is highly consistent, but because he is amazingly inconsistent. We dispute and argue, pro and con, about him, as we do about living friends, whose actions do not happen exactly to accord with our notions of the fitness of things. Now, if he was one of the French "consistencies"—if he was set in motion, leg and arm, like a child's Jack-o'-long-legs, by pulling a string; there would be no occasion for this. Some large-eared critic will interpose here, and, with a knowing smirk and wink of an eye, because he thinks he has caught one—remark, "if *inconsistency* be what you want, it is easier to draw an inconsistent than a consistent character: it is only to jumble up all sorts of heterogeneous passions and actions——" Gently, gently, good friend. We were just going to observe that this doctrine of inconsistency is the dramatic "*pons asinorum*," over which, as you are sure to plump, you had better stay where you are for a little,—we were upon the point of saying, that inconsistency *merely*, good critic, in the naked sense of the word, will not do. It must be a natural and consistent inconsistency; that is to say—(Now, mark, long ears)—*the actions inconsistent with each other, must be such as we have seen to occur in nature in the order in which they stand; and which may be accounted for by reference to some known and customary temperament.* And this is the case with Hamlet. His aberrations are precisely those which we are accustomed to observe in nervous, morbidly sensitive, and melancholy characters. His hatred of his uncle and disgust for his mother; his extreme curiosity respecting the supernatural appearance of his father; his determined purposes of revenge; his speedy falterings and doubts; his loathing of the world and distrust of all around him; his love for Ophelia; his suspicions and consequent harsh treatment; his *easy* assumption of insanity, as being constitutionally inclined to that disease; his moody triflings with Polonius, the Players, Osrick, and the Grave-diggers; his *wildness* at Ophelia's funeral; and, lastly, his resolute and cool activity when mortally wounded, make up a compound of character, natural in the highest degree, but depending upon intricacies of temperament, passion, and situation, such as Shakspeare only could have conceived, and of which the world will probably never see the equal in ideal representation. Other plays may be more poetical; others more terrible; others more pathetic; but, for the exhibition of *human nature*, this unrivalled effort must continue to be the admiration of learned and unlearned as long as the English language shall exist. The play is almost a *monologue*. The other characters are barely foils to Hamlet. He appears in nearly every scene, and yet at every appearance it is under some new phase, some change, some turn of the varying currents which ruffle the surface of his mind, some momentary shadowing of feeling or circumstance which we have not seen before. Upon the same principle is to be calculated

the value of the characters of Lear, Falstaff, Richard the Second, Macbeth, Rosalind, Beatrice, Jacques, and (to leave our great dramatist) of Leon, Caratach, Friscobaldo, Lady Brute, Lord Ogleby, Mrs. Cole, Sir Luke Limp, Sir Peter Teazle, Charles Surface, Tyke, and a host of others, which to mention were endless. All these are "inconsistent," some of them enough to puzzle a college. But then they are *naturally* so; and that is the key of the matter. So much for character.

Ever since about the year seventeen hundred and eighty-nine, there has been a dreadful outcry against "French principles," and perhaps they may be bad enough; but French criticism" has done us ten times the harm. To be sure, it has had more time, having infested us for these hundred and sixty years—and in that hundred and sixty it has played the mischief with the play-houses. It has gone near to transform our tragedies into pompous dull poems, and our comedies into acted charades, or witty essays, in question and answer. In these doings, it has proceeded upon the wise or rather *sage* principle, vulgarly called "buttering a goose;" prosifying where there was prose enough before, and poetising what was poetical enough already. In tragedy, the mischief was wrapped up in a single word, "dignity;" in comedy, by another, "wit;" small pills, considering of what a strong dose of nonsense they were the vehicle.

If we define the Drama, it must be a sort of poetry, which represents the serious or the lighter passages of human life, by exhibiting the conversations and actions of supposed agents. To be *Poetry*, it must of course be *poetical*, more or less; and to be *Dramatic*, that is to say, *like life*, it must, equally, of course, be *familiar* more or less; for human actions and sayings are, more or less, familiar things. This seems so palpable and self-evident, that one wonders how it could ever be missed, and what is still more extraordinary, the practical part or way to bring the desired effect about seems equally plain. If a thing is to be at once poetical and familiar, there is only one way for it, and that is to mix poetry and familiarity together in some proportion or other. There is no other conceivable way. This was the mode of the *old* English Dramatists one and all—the very "heart of their mystery," too sound a one to be "plucked out" by a gabbling "*Mounseer*" of a French critic. In Shakspeare and his fellows we find the most glorious and exalted poetry brought down to the familiar level and semblance of common life and nature, by a judicious and artful intermixture of the strongest, boldest, plainest, most straight-forward expressions and allusions. But this was not refined enough, forsooth, for the "polite nation!" not it! To put water in his brandy, until it was reduced *to proof*, was too homely an expedient for a triple-japanned Frenchman, who "could not say apple dumpling" if you would hang him. The allusions were too coarse, too low; and the expressions too rude. Your French critic, like the owner of the dancing bear in Goldsmith's play, "*hates any thing low.*" "*Meal and bran together*" is not for them. So we are to be crammed with indigestible superfine *French-Roll*, as insipid as chalk, and twice as noxious, in lieu of our wholesome old English Messeline. "Oh! their *bons! their bons!*"

Somebody, the other day (was it the Opium-eater?) told a story of his reading the play of *Macbeth* (he should have read him first his own

admirable critique on "the knocking at the Door") to an intelligent Frenchman. When they came to the line,

"I heard the owl scream and the cricket cry,"

up starts monsieur, with a loud "bah!" declaring that no audience in France could be brought to endure an allusion so mean and ridiculous. He would have said the same thing a scene or two afterwards,—

"The night hath been unruly. Where we lay
Our chimneys were blown down——"

A French tragedy hero does not condescend to know any thing of chimneys. This is just of a piece with all their criticism; and what havoc would it not make with the most *effective* passages of our best tragedies? Look at the most inward and searching passages of the old English Drama, and it will be found that their effects result from this happy mixture of the familiar with the poetical.—Hear Desdemona:

"My mother had a maid, call'd Barbara;
She was in love, and he she loved proved mad,
And did forsake her. She had a song of 'willow,'
An old thing 'twas, but it express'd her fortune,
And she died singing it. That song, to-night,
Will not go from my mind.——"

Again Lear:

———"Fair daylight?
I am mightily abused. I should o'en die with pity
To see another thus. I know not what to say.
I will not swear these are my hands.
Let's see;
I feel this pin prick.——"

And again,

"Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,
And thou no breath at all? O! thou wilt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never!
Pray you undo this button—thank you, sir.
Do you see this?—Look at her—look—her lips—
Look there—look there——"

Or look again at that scene in Webster's *Duchess of Malfy*, when the Brother and Bosola contemplate the dead body of the Duchess; and read the convulsed ejaculation of the former, when choked with a sudden rising of remorse, he gasps out,

"Cover her face—mine eyes dazzle—
—She hath died young."

Or again, her simple words to her attendant, when, scarcely daring to be affectionate to her children, she delivers herself over to the executioners.

———"Bid the girl
Say her prayers ere she sleep; and get the boy
Some syrup for his cold.——"

Let any one read these scenes, and if he be not stabbed, struck to the heart, as with a dagger, why, then, let us consent to be swindled out of

our natures by a set of shallow, cold blooded, pedantic sophisms, too silly for sensible men, and too hollow for men of feeling.

All this is bad enough, but it would have provoked one less had these high-flown idolaters of poetical dignity and poetical omnipotence been consistent with themselves. If men will be transcendently poetical, so let them be. But for Heaven's sake, if we are to have nothing but creams and whipt-syllabubs, don't send them up to us upon a wooden platter. It is odd that at this time of day any set of people should be found foolish enough to stick to the narrow doctrine of the "Unities;" but 'thrice marvellous is it that such a doctrine should be held by the poetical *par excellence*, the haters of every thing prosaic. This is almost beyond a joke. We are to swallow without a strain tomes of stately high-flown blank verse, from the mouths of persons who, judging by appearance, could never be suspected of speaking any thing above decentish "linsey-woolsey." Not a prosaic word or syllable are we to hear, so tenacious are we of the elevated. But let us once be requested to let the pit of Drury Lane be supposed to be removed from Rome to Brundisium; or let us be asked, as a particular favour, to let four hours stand for four days; and

—"Plump down we drop,
Ten thousand fathoms deep,

to the flat region of matter of fact and reality. Oh! no. It is easy enough to take a parcel of fellows, every one of whom we know as well as our grandfathers, to be Greeks and Romans talking ten syllable blank verse; but to imagine a change of place or time—to hurry the mail-coach, or set the clock forward—monstrous!—To proceed, however.

Many people, especially those of a romantic and metaphysical turn, dislike plain, straight-forward, homely reasons for things. They affect the recondite and mysterious, and do not love to have the "ghost" turn 'out to be only a turnip-lantern. But now and then there is no alternative; and the explanation of the causes of the decline of the English drama must, it is to be feared, partake a little of the spirit of Burns's solution of the origin of Scotch courage:

"Sages their solemn eon may steek,
And raise a philosophic reek,
And physically causes seek
In clime and season;
But tell me whiskey's name in Greek——
I'll tell the reason!"

"*Monopoly*" happens to be Greek ready-made, and that is all the difference. It is an amusing thing to read the heavy dolours and laments that are every day poured forth over the decay of *British* dramatic taste, especially as contrasted with its flourishing state amongst our refined neighbours in France. "Go and see (sob they) Talma play in a tragedy of Corneille or Voltaire, and you shall not hear a pin drop, so hushed is the audience. Nay, so saturated is the pit with the dramatic spirit, that the smallest deviation from the true text of the author is sure to draw down a correcting hiss of disapprobation. Whilst in Drury Lane or Covent Garden——But we can no more."——

Lackadaisy! now let us pick up our senses a little, and try to look this astounding difference plainly in the face. Don't let us be spouted, and mouthed, and whimpered out of our understandings. Let us inquire into the facts; for upon an appeal to sheer common matter-of-fact must the decision of this apparent paradox hinge at last. Let us request this Jeremiah of a Cockney to drop his lamentations for a little, and condescend to answer a couple of brief and simple questions. "Pray, now, tell us how many theatres for the enactment of regular tragedy, comedy, and farce, have you '*in Lumum*,' as you call it?" "Two."—"How many are there in Paris, do you reckon?" "Can't say precisely, 'pon honour; may be two-and-thirty." Very well, good gentleman of the press: now, in the difference between two and two-and-thirty lies this mystery;—and, in the difference between thirty-two and two, its development.

If we make a sort of rough calculation of the different grades of a population, enlightened, half enlightened, and unenlightened, we shall, of course, find the whole to comprehend a huge diversity of folks, of different hues and shades of intellect; and amongst these must be, of course, as many various and opposite reasons for going to a playhouse, as for going to a church or conventicle. Here, a grave-looking man goes, because he likes a laugh at a good comedy;" and there, a well-fed-looking merry little grig has a strong propensity to shed Hogarthian tears over a "tradesman's tragedy." This bushy-eyed black-letter can away with nothing but old plays; that dirty-cravatted little cockney can relish nothing but new ones. Old Rosy-gills "likes nothing (puffing and blowing) equal to a good farce." Miss Melesindar, his daughter, ("Fie! pa! what a taste!") doats upon the Stranger and Lovers' Vows. Master Caleb insists upon Prouse, or Mother Goose; whilst their uncle by the mother's side, Peter Squeak, affects a musical entertainment, the Haunted Tower, or the Cabinet. Tim Stay-tape goes every other night to see "the 'orses;" whilst John Lump divides his affections between "the quadrupeds" and "Grimaldi." Old Lady this is rapturous upon "young Roscii," and patronizes "Miss Mudie." Lady the other betrays a preference for Signor Richer, the tight-rope dancer. The "dandies" d—n the play altogether, and go to look at the girls: the girls go to be looked at by the dandies. The "light-finger'd gentry" go to look after other people's pockets; the sellers of ices, jellies, liqueurs, and play-bills, to look after their own. The loungers look at the ices and jellies, or at nothing at all. Now, without taking the trouble to count fingers, here are enumerated, perhaps, some dozen and a half of different motives for going into a play-house. Suppose then, at any theatre, on any given night or nights, (as Mr. Coleridge would say) the performance be predicated to be of any given species, say a tragedy or a comedy, it follows, there being only two theatres, that, upon a calculation of chances, only one-ninth of the audience will be interested by the performance *per se*, besides the collateral consideration that, of that ninth perhaps a third are, from the size of the house, too far off to hear what is going forward. "They manage (certain it is) these matters better in France." Contrast this *hotch-potch* with the state of matters at Paris. Likely enough there may be at the "Théâtre Français," a genteel audience, the parterre a hotbed of critics, with cam-

bric-handkerchiefs, applauding Talma and Voltaire in the same breath, with all the energy of Puff himself. But be it recollected, that at one and the same moment of time, there is a second set of merry grigs enjoying the broad-farce and burlesque of the "Port St. Martin;" a third pastoralising over the little musical pieces of the "Vaudeville;" a fourth, amusing themselves at the "Variétés;" a fifth, listening to pleasant airs at the "Opera Comique;" and a sixth, weeping over pathetic ones at the "Academie Royale de Musique," or the "Théâtre Italien;" besides hundreds more gabbling and grimacing at the "Salle Favart," the "Odeon," or some place or other of dramatic or semi-dramatic entertainment, in every street and l'auxbourg of Paris, as each shall happen to be honoured, on each night, with the patronage of Madame and Monsieur. Now here is a very different state of affairs. Every one has a theatre *according to his taste*, and thither accordingly he hies, and is tolerably quiet and rational when he gets there. But cram these heterogeneous materials, *perforce*, into a great overgrown "patent" playhouse where nine-tenths of them either do not hear, or do not care about the matter in hand, and what wonder that the whole should become a rank and seething mass of noise, heat and dissipation, vice, and folly; and that those for whose especial benefit the place was intended, should especially—*keep away*?

That any one should suppose the English nation indifferent to its better dramas, seems very ridiculous. Yet such things have been asserted, and the most precious proof was to be the practice of those bloated hotbeds of all that is weak, worthless, and exotic—the London Theatres! What a conclusion to draw from such premises! Good God! The French more regardful than the English of their dramatic authors!—when the editions of Shakspeare alone, taking number, costliness, and elaboration into the account, would perhaps equal, if not exceed, all the editions of all their dramatic poets that the French ever produced. Do we not see edition after edition of our older dramatic poets undertaken, published, and sold? Do we not see their lines quoted, their style imitated, and their example followed, by the best writers of the age? And, after all this, we are to be told that dramatic taste is extinct in England? No, no. Dramatic taste is upon the revival in England. There is more and better dramatic taste now in England than there was a century ago. Let our monopoly-hating ministers only break up the most barefaced and wanton of all monopolies. Let them pack off the pickpockets and prostitutes to the Opera-house, the Argyle-rooms, or the Pavé: the dandies to Bond-Street or Tattersal's, and the cockneys to Vauxhall: the jockeys to Astly's; and the painters to the Diorama. Let the lovers of noise and nonsense go to the Concert of Ancient Music; and the lovers of nonsense without noise, to the Fantoccini exhibition, or the next Quakers' meeting—but let the lovers of the genuine English Drama have *a theatre of their own*. Let it be moderately sized, moderately lighted, with moderate hours, fair scenery, good actors, and excellent management, and it shall be seen whether Shakspeare cannot draw as attentive an audience as Punch, the Oratorios, or the Rev. Mr. Irving.

T. D

THE DRAMA---NO. VI.

(Concluded.)

MADMEN—GHOSTS—READING—SOLILOQUIES—MORALITY.

THERE remain, still, two or three other topics, on which it may be proper to touch, for the same reasons that have influenced the preceding course of investigation.

Nothing is more common than madness or madmen, in the machinery of the drama. But, unfortunately for the audience, wherever the writer seems to have done most, the actor seems to do least, in the representation of madness. We had observed this, on many occasions, where there was no want of zeal, talent, or pride in the actor; and we could not avoid coming to this conclusion at last—namely, that where an author introduces madness into a drama, the more he leaves to the performer, the better it will be for both.

Neither mad prose nor mad poetry is the language of a real madman. A sullen, strange, unaccountable silence; or a peculiarity of look or tone, of enunciation, attitude, or gesture—these are the true language of madness.

Madness too, however it may be brought about, will generally indicate its own cause. The deportment of the afflicted person, in almost every case, will show whether his malady came *on slowly, or at once*; whether it proceeded from a sudden, heart-breaking dispensation, hereditary disease, or long-brooding sorrow.

This cannot be known either to writers or performers: if it were, we should see many clear distinctions preserved, not only in the language, but in the representation of madmen.

There is one kind of derangement, which is only to be detected upon one point. It is the one-idea of the Germans. This we

never see upon the stage. He who is mad at all, is generally mad throughout the scene, or perhaps throughout the play. There is a temporary madness which proceeds from passion. This, perhaps, is better represented than any other; but then, it is generally every thing but madness—it is *only* a paroxysm of passion.

There is another, which is never violent; but melancholy, mild, and sad beyond expression. This too, we never see in the management either of a writer or performer. Both seem to think that a madman will never be known for what he is, unless he make a plenty of noise, at some time or other during the play. These are deplorable mistakes; and we are persuaded that the most affecting representations of this dreadful malady might be made, without any painting or dressing—any paleness of the face—any outcry—or any violence; but simply by the peculiarly slow, or peculiarly eager tone of the voice in conversation. We have heard a crazy girl say—I am not here—this is not me—I'm in Egypt—so as to bring the tears into our eyes. Yet her look was natural, and her tone that of unaffected, quiet sincerity.

He who has gone mad, instantaneously as it were, no matter from what cause—whether from the sudden or dreadful death of his beloved—from fright—or from any thing else, will show it by a greater degree of abruptness in his movement, look, and manner. There will be violent and sudden transports with such a man, as there was with the father (out of whose arms the child had leaped from a window) imitated by Garrick. But he who has gone mad slowly, and by degrees, from any constitutional or hereditary predisposition; or through a long course of suffering, *will show it by a difference of manner.*

And yet, whenever we see a madman upon the stage, he is always of the same class: young and old; male and female; whatever may be their temper or constitution; or whatever may have been the cause of their malady, the moment they become a part of the personages in a play, they are altogether alike in language and deportment; full of quick and violent transition.

We are convinced moreover, that the part of a madman should be left as much as possible to the performer. Give him a few words, a few hints, a few situations, and leave him free for the rest. A *speech* will be pretty sure to destroy a whole scene; a single phrase properly applied, may save a whole piece.

For an example of the fine effect which may be produced by a few simple words, I would refer to those, which Mr. Young, as Lear, addresses to Edgar (1)—‘prithce tell me, whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman?’

(1) In Shakspeare, however, these very words are put into the mouth of the fool; and addressed to Lear, whose provoked royalty replies—“a king! a king!”

Mr. Young manages to give these few words extraordinary power. He puts the enquiry in downright earnest; and with a look of profound solicitude. Edgar replies all wide of the mark; but *while* he is replying, Lear stands by him, with his hand lifted, in the attitude of one who is gratified with another's ingenuity; nodding assent, and smiling with a pitiable significance, at every word, as if—poor Lear—as if the answer of mad Tom actually related to the question. Nothing can be more admirable than this point in Mr. Young's Lear.

But Mr. Keane is faulty in that particular passage. His conception appears to be the same; but he does not give the same effect at all to the question. While Edgar is replying, he keeps time with one hand, the fore finger of which is extended upon the palm of the other, with a more serious abstraction of look; and with less of that deplorable graciousness which is so moving in the Lear of Mr. Young.

Now it happens that this point was never made, nor intended, by Shakspeare. It is altogether an accidental thing, to which the talent of an actor has given effect.

But if we have not said enough to prove that the actor should be left as free as possible, in every scene of derangement, we would ask those who are much at theatres, to call to mind the parts in every representation of madness, which have most affected them. They will find, probably, without one exception, that they can remember what was *done*, by the actor, much better than what was *said*: and that what little they do remember of the language was moreover, in parts where the least was said, and the most done: and that the finest points were those of the actor, perhaps not even indicated by the author.

Take the dagger scene of Macbeth; the tent-scene of Richard; or the mad-scene of Orestes. We hear little about the words, and care less, in all these: and yet, we can remember every look and every attitude of the performers.

Throughout the whole of the play referred to in No's IV. and V., the reader saw nothing of that language which is appropriated to madness, except for a moment or two. Every thing was left to the actor. And here—one word of Shakspeare's apparitions. They are worse than his witches—they deceive nobody. Who *can* be agitated or awe-struck at the sight of Hamlet's father? No matter how mysteriously the poet may have conceived the spirit of buried Denmark, the moment that he appears upon the stage, the spirit and the mystery are gone. The royal Dane goes through his exercise in a blaze of light. Banquo too, walks leisurely athwart the great hall crowded with lords and ladies, in the full possession of their senses. Both are of the grave, armed in

the panoply of the grave ; and yet, both are so managed in the representation, as to make every thing that they do, appear like a childish and ridiculous farce, in comparison with which, the stone-wall in *Pyramus and Thisbe* is a grave and imposing invention ; and the person that plays 'moonshine' a respectable and rational undertaker for the drama.

Now and then, it is true, although very rarely, one may meet with something on the stage, which corresponds more efficiently with his notions of the preternatural. Thus, the trooping of spirits, afar off—through an atmosphere of smoke before the sleeping Gloster, when the stage is rendered tolerably dark ; and the ghosts are not particularly anxious for distinction, is really quite an imposing affair.

But we should be inclined to believe that in other cases, where we are accustomed to seeing a ghost upon the stage, it is the work of those, who are properly called *managers*—rather than the design of the poet.

The appearance of Banquo is one of the cases to which we allude. The spirit has nothing to say ; and therefore it is that I would vindicate Shakspeare from the absurdity of bringing it face to face, with an audience. For who would believe that a being, who had once fallen upon the dagger-thought in *Macbeth*, although it were by accident, would ever have ordered up a real ghost, on any other occasion ? Nay, it never would be believed, for a moment, that the design was Shakspeare's, whatever the records of learning or the traditions of the stage may testify, were it not that after having appalled the very hearts of men, by his frightful appeal to their imagination in the murder of Duncan—away from their sight and hearing—he returned again to the vulgar, mechanical expedient of stage-murders.

We all remember the dagger-scene. There is probably no parallel to it in the history of the stage. How much more should we be affected at the banquet-scene, were Banquo invisible to us. What would be our sensations, were we to see *Macbeth* turning round, in a moment of hilarity—suddenly transfixed—convulsed and gasping with unspeakable horror, before an empty chair. It is now a childish and insulting farce ; outraging not only all the laws of superstition, but the common belief of the nursery.

By the present mode of representation we are called upon to endure the violent and silly trick of a dozen or twenty of *Macbeth's* courtiers, who are on the stage—who are looking at the chair, and pretending all the time not to see any thing in it.

And not only this, but we are called upon to endure the trick, while they are neither moved nor disturbed, but tranquil in their minds, and so far as we know, altogether innocent in their hearts.

By a contrary course, we should only be called upon to endure the trick, or to acquiesce in the pretence of one man—fearfully agitated—guilty—and subject, as he has already shown by the dagger, to see that which is not—while he affects to see that which we cannot see.

How much more heartily should we sympathise in the consternation of the company; and in the amazement of lady Macbeth, whom, guilty as she is, the author will not suffer to see the spirit, (thereby showing his reverence for the popular superstition) if we, like them, could see nothing in the chair—no shadow traversing the bright floor of the banqueting-hall?

And so too, in the second appearance of buried Denmark, how much more heartily should we participate in the distress of the queen, if there were no spirit visible to us—nothing upon the wall, nor issuing from it—while the lord Hamlet was trembling with awe?

In both cases, were there no visible ghost, would there not be a thousand times more opportunity for the display of the actor's power; for the working up of our imagination; for the stir of that sorcery which we feel so effectually in the dagger-scene?

How should we bear to see, in the dagger-scene, a real dagger suspended by a horse-hair—'the handle toward his hand'—with 'gouts of blood' upon the blade—while Macbeth is clutching at it? Is there one of us, who would not start up with indignation?

And yet, where would be the difference between that scene, so played, and this of the Ghost, in the banqueting-scene, as it is played?

It would be idle to say that the multitude will not endure a change. (2) The multitude are men, like ourselves; and quite as capable of estimating what is natural, as the best-educated among us.

It is not a little remarkable however, that the present mode of representation is managed so as to be just as offensive to the popular belief, as it is to the doctrine of metaphysics; just as much of an outrage upon vulgar superstition, as upon philosophy.

(2) The above was written five years ago; and the same opinions were maintained with respect to Banquo and other stage-ghosts in *Otho*, eleven years ago.

In the '*LIFE OF COOKE*' we have found it mentioned that Mr. John Kemble had attempted to introduce the change, for which we are contending, in the scene where Banquo appears; but that the audience would not endure it. There may be some mistake about this, or the scene may have been badly acted—or the plan was abandoned too hastily.

Since the above note was written, we see by the papers that Mr. Forrest, a native tragedian of extraordinary merit, if we may believe what the public say, for we have not had an opportunity of seeing him, has actually played the banquet-scene without a ghost, and been supported by the audience.

All who believe in the appearance of spirits; and 'those who deny their belief in words, confess it by their fears,' believe that they are visible generally, if not always, to but one person at a time; and he, the guilty, the afflicted, or the deranged person.

It matters little whether those who imagine that they see a spirit—do or do not really see one. It is enough for our purpose, that they are under an impression, whether true or false, is not the point here—that they *do* see a spirit.

All unite in believing, whatever may be the cause of this effect, whether it be or be not a delusion, that those who see a spirit, or believe they see a spirit, are, in some way or other, distempered, or melancholy, guilty, apprehensive, or given to solitary wild musing.

Both parties believe that the spirit, whenever and wherever it may appear, though it be in a crowded assembly, in a blaze of light, is only visible to the distempered or guilty person.

It is no part of their belief that the guilty or diseased person is affected in such a way that he does not see what *is*—and still less is it a part of their belief that *others*, who are neither guilty nor diseased, neither agitated nor alarmed, melancholy nor solitary, are so affected by what is preternatural, that *they* do not see what *is*.

The sum and substance of the belief of both is only this—namely, that the murderer, the afflicted or distempered person sees that which is not, or that which nobody else can see.

All people, no matter what may have been their education, or what their theory upon this point, can believe that Macbeth, a murderer; or Hamlet, an avenger of blood, the one distracted with guilt, and the other nearly or quite mad, may *imagine* that he sees a spirit.

But where is the superstition, or doctrine, which teaches that a great multitude, who are looking at a person, surrounded by an atmosphere of light, and clearly visible to each one of them, do nevertheless *not* see him.

Yet *this*, by the present mode of representation, is what we are called upon to believe.

We must be in some degree persuaded that the company in the banqueting-hall do *not* see Banquo; and that the Queen of Denmark does *not* see Hamlet's father, while we see them both;—and not only this, but we must be in a like degree persuaded that *we* do not see them too; or else how can we understand the perplexity of the company and the queen; or the amazement of Macbeth and Hamlet?

This is another, and the last of those probabilities for which we contend. Our enjoyment grows out of our acquiescence in a

delusion—but there can be no delusion under such an affronting trick, any more than there would be in playing ‘moonshine’ or ‘stone-walls’ before us, as they are played in *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

In the tragedy referred to, almost every thing of this nature was left to the actor, wherever there was a design to affect the audience by an appeal to that awful instinct of the human heart, which enables it by sympathy alone, to hear, see, and feel, the inaudible, invisible, and incorporeal—merely by looking at the face of another, while he appears to be undergoing a transformation before something invisible.

Two or three pages more, and we have done with our essay on the drama.

Why are *SOLILOQUIES* delivered as they are? Why standing? Is it more suitable for the lord Hamlet, so unhappy and so meditative, to be walking about with a book or a pipe in his hand? Sitting in most cases would be far more natural and effectual. Beside, if a man really is talking to himself—there will be a something in his very gesture unlike what he would use, if another were present; nay, his very tone of voice would be as peculiar, as that of one talking in his sleep; as unlike his other voice we mean. They who pretend to talk to themselves, should talk not to others, but to *themselves*, even while they talk so as to be overheard. A tragedian, who directed his voice to one afar off, while he was communing aloud with himself, would err as egregiously as the public speaker, who having a large house to fill, should *look* only toward those near him—in which case, he would speak to them and to them only, and would be unheard by the more distant of the assembly. Hence, if a child does not speak loud enough, nor distinctly enough, we set him in the far part of the room, and bid him *look* at us while he speaks; and the defect is soon cured.

EMPHASIS may be given *better* by lowering, than by raising the voice. The most terrible and concentrated rage will never betray itself by noise—nothing more than a whisper will you hear from the trumpet-voiced hero, when he is really bent upon the death of an adversary in single combat. Exceptions may occur, but such is the general law.

STAGE-READING.—But while upon the subject of stage-reading, we have two or three other observations to offer. We should give a rule for reading which is very simple. Read as you would converse, or *talk*; if you were in a situation where the language you are reading would be proper to talk. Men read with one voice, talk with another; declaim with another; preach with another; and pray with another. This would be very well, if

it were *natural*, or if it were *required* by the language, or character of the composition. But a solemn, pompous enunciation of poor thought, is rather worse than a flippant, pert, tripping delivery of that which is pompous and solemn. We have heard one good reader, as he was called, read magnificent poetry as if it were an advertisement: another read an advertisement as if it were magnificent poetry. Both, in fact, were in the habit of reading whatever they read aloud, precisely in the same tone, with precisely the same variations—no matter what was the subject—no matter how it was treated—prose or poetry; blank verse or doggerel; an oration or a dialogue. And so too if they were called upon to address a popular assembly, you would never be able to judge by the sound of their voices, whether the subject were important or trivial—the destinies of an empire, or a tax upon tobacco-pipes. The subject had no influence over their intonations; the place and audience were all that they considered.

There are others who make no distinction when they are reading, between essay, narrative and dialogue; acting and recitation. Suppose one of these people called upon to pronounce these words—

Once more into the breach, dear friends—*once more!*

He would never ask out of whose mouth such words were supposed to proceed; and still less would he desire to know, what he should know, to read at all; that is, whether they were spoken by a young man or an old one; a legitimate king or a usurper.

You might as well ask whether he had good teeth or bad ones; whether he turned his toes in or out, somebody may say here.

And so he might, and should, we reply, if he were called upon to *act* the character; to *represent* the speaker. But even while reading, he should be governed by the age and authority of the speaker. And why so?

Simply because that which would be natural in a young man, might be very ridiculous in an old one; and the reader, after delivering the line like a rash, headlong boy, might come upon a passage to convince him that the speaker, instead of being a youth, was an old man, with a feeble voice. He might as well read a passage in the voice of a man, which had been prepared by the author for a woman.

But how should he distinguish between the usurper and the legitimate sovereign?

As easily, we answer, as he could between the deportment of a subaltern and a general. Were you to hear the words delivered in a field of battle, you could tell immediately, by the sound of the speaker's voice—by his action—by a thousand slight indications, whether

he had been accustomed all his life to authority—whether he was born to dominion ; whether he had been always obeyed—without question or excuse—or whether he had come to dominion by accident—had enjoyed his authority for only a little time ; and was accustomed to have his commands diligently examined, and reluctantly obeyed.

The man who is born and bred to authority of any kind ; accustomed never to hear his orders disputed, within a certain province, will deliver them very differently—other circumstances being equal—from the man who has been unexpectedly thrown into the same office. There would be little or no resemblance either in look or speech, at the time of giving a command. Habitual power, indisputable strength, a mere habit of command, up from their infancy, in legitimate kings for example, would produce a correspondent expression of undoubting security and composure, in every familiar case, where they issued a command. Never having heard of disobedience, they would never look for it : never having been obliged to wrestle for dominion, it would never enter their heads to be prepared for it.

A king born to command, would use little gesture, in comparison with a man of the same temperament, in the same situation, who had been born of the multitude. He might, like Harry the Fourth, speak the *language* of entreaty ; but his *look* and *manner* would be full of authority ; fiery expostulation or absolute command. He would speak as if it were a condescension for him to point out a proper place for his ‘ noble English ’ to die for him. But a usurper—the very same person, if he were a usurper, or had been born a plebeian, would probably betray his origin and history, by tenfold earnestness, positiveness, or impetuosity ; by the planted foot—the sustained countenance—and the grappled weapon—ready, with his warlike frame, to enforce obedience, at the first movement of rebellion or hesitation. Absolute power is always calm ; weakness never. Weakness cannot even counterfeit the bearing of strength—when strength is not in action. It is more noisy, eager, jealous and violent. It requires more movement and uproar to keep itself in countenance. It must work itself into a passion, by lashing its own sides, before it will venture upon any thing perilous. The Spartan flute would have no power—the trumpet and the drum all power over it on the approach of battle.

In short—We hold that a man may read or speak, so that without knowing the subject, without understanding the language in which he reads or speaks, you will be ready to exclaim, when you hear him, with full confidence—that is the voice of a king !—that the voice of a Cromwell !—that the voice of a subaltern !—

and we hold that reading well, either on the stage or off, is not only the rarest, but the most wonderful of human accomplishments, after speaking.

Napoleon appears to have entertained very just notions on the subject of tragedy in general, and of that sort of tragedy in particular which we see in the possession of the stage. In a work, entitled *Souvenirs Historiques sur la vie et la mort de Talma*, by M. Tissot, we have the following very direct testimony in our favour :

“Every body knows that our celebrated actor had frequent conversations with Napoleon, of which he availed himself to improve in the theatrical art. If Napoleon frequently resorted to declamation and quackery in his political life, he was by no means fond of them on the stage. In his interviews with Talma, he was constantly adverting to the excess of action and voice in the theatre. Speaking to him of the part of Nero, in *Britannicus*, he said, ‘I would wish to see in your representation of it more of the contest between a bad nature and a good education. I should like also fewer gestures ; persons of that kind do not display themselves ; they are more concentrated. At the same time, I cannot sufficiently praise the simplicity and nature to which you have generally reconducted tragedy. In fact, when dignified individuals, whether they owe their elevation to birth or to talents, are agitated by passion, or influenced by important ideas, they no doubt speak a little loudly, but their language is not less simple and natural. For instance, at this moment you and I speak as all people speak in conversation. But you and I are making matter for history.’

“Another time, the character of Cæsar, in the *Death of Pompey*, was under discussion. ‘In pronouncing,’ said Napoleon, ‘that long tirade against kings in which the following verse occurs—

‘*Pour moi, qui tiens le trône égal à l’infamie ;*’

Cæsar does not believe a word of what he is saying. He talks in that manner because his Romans are behind him, whom it is his interest to persuade that he regards a throne with horror. He is far from thinking that the throne, already the object of his wishes, is a contemptible thing. The actor ought, therefore, to be very careful not to make him speak as if he was himself convinced of the truth of his sentiments.’

“In another conversation, Napoleon said, ‘Talma, you often call upon me in the morning ; what do you see here ? Princesses, who have been deprived of their lovers ; princes, who have lost their dominions ; ancient kings, whom war has deposed from

their supreme rank ; great generals, hoping or asking for crowns. I am surrounded by disappointed ambition, ardent rivalry, unexpected catastrophes, griefs hidden at the bottom of the heart, afflictions which burst forth outwardly. All this undoubtedly is tragedy. My palace is full of tragedy. I am assuredly myself the most tragic personage of the age. Well ! Do you see us throw our arms aloft, study our gestures, assume attitudes, affect airs of grandeur ? Do you hear us exclaim ? No. We speak naturally ; as every body speaks who is inspired by an interest or a passion. And so, before me, have behaved the persons who have occupied the stage of the world, and also performed tragedies on the throne. These are examples to contemplate.' " (3)

STAGE-MORALITY.—Before we leave the subject, however, one word upon the morality of the stage : for if it is in fact no better than it is represented to be, and generally believed to be by the adversaries of the stage, nothing can help the drama—nothing ought—save a speedy and thorough revolution. We would go yet further. We would even say that if the moral character of the players be not improved *in the public estimation*—we care not whether they are justly or unjustly charged as a body, with low propensities and brutal vices—nothing can, nothing ought to save the stage or the drama. Is the stage what the friends of the stage would have us believe—a school of manners ? or morals ? If so, shameless wives and profligate husbands have no more business on the stage, than they have in the desks of our churches, or at the head of our boarding-schools. If their manners are good—in contradistinction to their morals—so much the worse teachers are they ; for they give a polish to what would be hateful or disgusting without polish. Let us but consider what prodigious power example has over the best and purest. Virtuous women will sit together in a body, at churches and theatres, and hear that said, month after month, which no one of the whole would venture to repeat in the presence of another, nor even to read to her husband in their sleeping-chamber. Nay—at our

(3) " A political event of great importance grew out of one of these conversations. It was the measure which gave the Jews in France civil rights. In the early part of July 1806, the tragedy of Esther was performed at court. The morning after, Talma appeared, according to custom, at the emperor's breakfast-table ; at which M. de Champagny, then Minister of the Interior, was also present. The conversation turned on the play of the preceding evening. ' That Ahasuerus was a miserable king,' said Napoleon to Talma : and the instant after, addressing himself to the minister, ' What is the present state of the Jews ? Make me a report on the subject.' The report was made ; and in about a fortnight after this conversation, government, on the 26th of July 1806, convoked the first assembly of Notables among the Jews, the object of which was to fix the destiny of that nation, and to give it a legal existence in France."

social parties they hear that *sung* by women, because many are together to keep each other in countenance, which no man there would venture to *say*. We are no friends to squeamishness—and are strongly of opinion, that people who look as if butter would not melt in their mouths, have their reasons for it. Women who have lost the reality, are amazingly careful about the appearance. But though we are no friends to squeamishness—and would allow the brave old-fashioned English to be uttered any where, if it was required by the occasion, or suitable to the company; still we are conscientiously and vehemently opposed to the vulgar ribaldry of the stage—even in its best and strongest days. By the stage, we mean both plays and players—for what the author does not say, the player does, *either in so many words*, or by appearing in a virtuous character, so as *give it the air of downright and savage burlesque*. What interpolations of the plays, what licentiousness of the author could ever do so much harm to the dignity and holiness of virtue, as to see a notoriously unfaithful wife playing the character of a faithful one, or a wretched profligate aping the carriage, and counterfeiting the proud sympathies of a father? All the Beaumonts and Fletchers, the Ben Jonsons, the Vanburgs, the Marlows and Centlivres that ever breathed, could not do so much harm to the beautiful instinct of modesty and virtue, as the representation of an afflicted husband by such a vulgar profligate as Mr. — (4), or that of a fond, faithful wife, uttering with every throe the language of poetry in praise of virtue, by such a heartless wanton as Mrs. —. The ancients understood this, and made their players wear masks, lest their private characters, if they were known, might either counteract, or neutralize the language of the author.

It may be said to be sure—and it has been said, that we have nothing to do with the private character of the players, any more than we have with the private character of rope-dancers, or butchers, or bakers.

Now this is untrue—but for a moment we will suppose it to be true. And we would ask, whether in point of fact we have nothing to do—nothing as a community—as fathers, husbands, sons—nor as citizens, with the *private* character of those with whom we deal? Suppose two butchers, or two bakers, living side by side with each other; each selling the same meat or the same bread at the same price: one butcher treating his wife ill, or notoriously neglecting his children—a gambler, an adulterer, and a knave in every thing but butcher's meat: one baker a bad citizen, a drunkard, a bully, or a bad neighbour; the other baker

(4) Any body may fill the blanks here—and every body can.

and butcher good men and true ; exemplary husbands, good fathers, and useful citizens.—*As honest men, with which would it be our duty to deal ?* Have we in truth no concern with private character ?

But again. It may be said, if the meat of the honest butcher or the bread of the honest baker, is not so good, what then ? Why even then—perhaps—we should not be too certain—but *perhaps* it would be about as worthy of good men, or sensible men, to take a little the worse meat or bread, if thereby they encouraged virtue, than a little better bread or a little better meat, if thereby they encouraged vice. But let every father judge for himself—and every husband follow his example. If the greatest actors are the greatest profligates (as the argument above would appear to *imply*)—we would ask, without stopping to enquire which is the cause and which the effect—whether on the whole, it would not be better to have worse acting, or even no acting at all, than to maintain such people, in the way we do, at the public expense ?

But as we have said before, it is not true that we have no more business with the private character of a player, than we have with the private character of a butcher or baker. The *quality* of bread or meat does not depend upon the private character of the butcher or the baker. But the quality of a play does—the quality of language—incident—sympathy—nay the whole virtue and beauty of the drama depends upon its *sincerity* ; upon its approximation to truth. When Madame — talks about a betrayed or a faithful wife—about conjugal or household virtues—or rebukes a wretch going about seeking whom he may devour, and trying to tempt her as Beverly's wife—what an insulting farce, what an outrage on all that gives dignity or worth to the drama ! And so too, if Mr. — should appear on the stage in the part of a virtuous man, to speak of the consolations afforded by the consciousness of a good character under every bereavement ; or to urge another to avoid this or that profligate path, the gambling-table or the brothel, by every argument in use among the virtuous or well-behaved, how utterly shameless, how insupportably ridiculous, how incapable of exciting our sympathy, would he appear—he and the author, and the play too, perhaps ; or else, for such is the only alternative, disguise it as we may—or else, how empty, vain, silly and hypocritical must appear all talk about virtue *off the stage*. Admit our pretences off the stage to be a farce therefore, a name—still, it is a farce worth playing well throughout : and if we understand our own game, we shall take care not to let the theatre *undo* what all the rest of society is occupied with doing. Let us be consistent. There cannot be

two standards of morality or virtue. On the stage or off, let us judge of the same things in the same way. . Let us have no blowing hot and cold in the same breath. Let us not say, off the stage, that a woman who outwits her husband or father, who intrigues or elopes at an hour's notice with the first man that falls in her way, is no better than she should be ; and then go to the theatre, and see the whole thing acted before our faces, and the faces of our wives and daughters and sisters, and call her a fine spirited girl. Let us not say, off the stage, that our teachers of morality (including manners and dancing) shall at least be gentlemen or gentlewomen, and then go to the play-house, and accept any body for a teacher—*anybody* !—even Mrs. —, or Miss —, or Mr. — !

All this, though we cared nothing for the drama—its dignity or its power, all this we would say even for the sake of the players. It is for their interest to be good men. Their glory is departing from them. Their day has gone by, and perhaps forever. Nothing can save them short of a speedy and thorough reform, not only of the stage and the vices of the stage, but of *individual character*. Think what might be done with a Kemble, a Siddons, a Young, a Macready, a Booth, a Mrs. Duff, and a few more of such men and such women, worthily *employed* upon the stage. They would be enough to revolutionize an empire.

But enough. We are all in a trance about the Drama. The phantom that we call tragedy is only an apparition—the bastard issue of childish Untruth and extravagant Poetry, like the old story-books of knighthood.

The time is not far off we believe, when there will be no more visible spectres on the stage ; no more stage-murders : when every body will be ready to acknowledge that whatever is addressed to the *senses*, will operate on the senses only, and not on the imagination : that a murder *described* may affect our imagination, because addressed to our imagination ; while a murder *acted* would only affect a few of our senses—our hearing and our sight : and so with a ghost on the stage : that soliloquies are not to be declaimed, nor narrative acted : that humble life, the store-house of domestic tragedy, is so full of profound sorrow, that to the fire-side, an author should go, if he wanted the materials for genuine tragedy. And why not ? We go thither for genuine comedy ; and the source of the one is always touching upon the source of the other : that as people never talk poetry off, they should never be allowed to talk it on the stage : that as every actor tries to deliver it like prose, it would save trouble every where and to every body to write in prose : that instead of the love we see, another sort of love would be better for deep tragedy—the love of a father for a son or a daughter, that of a brother for his own

dear sister, his widowed mother, or his younger and more helpless brother—instead of that love which is altogether sexual and therefore sensual (5) : that without preaching from the boards of a theatre, a morality might be taught there, which would have more effect on the multitude than the *unacted* morality of the church or the meeting-house : for it would find favour with those who do, as well as with those who do not hear preaching : that a powerful author might show a thousand things on the stage never attempted in the desk. He might show, for example, that as widowhood must be, because there *must* be a survivor in the marriage-state, we over-estimate the affliction ; for if it were so insupportable as we pretend, it would never have been made so *unavoidable* ; would never have been the necessary result of marriage : or he might show, nay *prove*, what no woman would ever acknowledge away from a theatre, that her strongest love, that for her offspring, is dependent in a surprising degree, more than she ever suspected before, upon their good looks or talents, waxing and waning with them through every alternation of gloom and glory, strength and beauty : in a word—for we shall never finish in this way—that nothing short of a thorough *revolution in plays and players, authors and actors*, can save the drama from general abhorrence and contempt. We have now done.

(5) We are not of those who believe that without love, what they call love too, the lewd blasphemers ! a tragedy cannot be made. On the contrary, we believe that a father's love for a sweet, young, innocent and beautiful daughter, or that of a mother for a free spirited, brave son, would be as tender and more sublime. The Greeks had a similar idea.

THE DRAMA---NO. III.

Suppose now that some great poet—Shakspeare if you please, were to take the passages from LEAR already mentioned, and convert them into the most beautiful poetry ever written. What would become of their nature? How would they affect us then? Who would care for a flourish, or a trope, in the mouth of Lear—when all that he wants to know upon earth—is—whether the tears that fall upon his face are ‘*wet?*’ (1) and who would forgive him for talking poetry, when after having buffeted the thunder and the rain, and the great wind, without shedding a tear, he is utterly overcome, and ready to take poison from the hand of a beloved child? or while he is questioning the counterfeit madman? or, indeed, at any time, when Lear is what Shakspeare meant him to be, the desolate and wronged old man, ‘four-score and upward;’ the ‘foolish, fond old man’ not in his proper mind? or any thing of that perplexing and wonderful old man,—so exceedingly natural withal—in his combination of abused royalty and dishonoured manhood—full of dignity and full of infirmity, full of the king, and full of the father, to the last?

And, on the contrary, if Shakspeare had chosen to put a simpler language into the mouth of Macbeth, on several occasions, how exceedingly powerful might the very same thoughts have been, which now appear tawdry, and out of place, or ineffectual? (2)

The blandishments of poetry and eloquence are never more offensive, than in those parts, where Shakspeare is most at home. The talking of Shakspeare is the most natural talking in the world; but his poetry and declamation, however superb they may be,—are exceedingly unnatural oftentimes, even for poetry and declamation.

As an example of this fine talking, I would refer to the passages already cited from Lear; to a multitude of others, to be found in every play that he ever wrote; and to one or two such as these, even where declamation was to be expected—

‘Draw, archers, *draw your arrows to the head!*

‘Spur your proud horses hard—and ride in blood—

* * * * *

‘Once more into the breach, dear friends—*once more!*’

(1) “Be your tears wet,” he says to Cordelia.

(2) Macbeth. Allow me to add here, that in the interpretation of Shakspeare, meaning, page 143, ‘If it were done when ’tis done,’ I was mistaken. I overlooked the context—the general argument however, instead of being weakened, is confirmed by this very error; what I complain of is the obscurity of the language—the difficulty of understanding it.

Let any man of common sense, or of common humanity, I might say, compare the plain, strong English of such eloquence, with any of those poetical passages of Shakspeare, which are so frequently quoted, in proof of his supremacy : such, for example, as a part of Hamlet's fine description of his father while his heart is breaking, wherein he runs through a chapter of heathen mythology, saying of him, among other pleasant things, that he had Hyperian curls—the front of Jove himself—an eye like Mars to threaten and command—

———— a station, like the herald Mercury
New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill.

as if a creature, in the situation of Hamlet, whether mad or not,(2) would ever think of such beautiful combinations at such a time.

There are specimens of absolute poetry, in the dialogues of Shakspeare, which appear altogether natural. That of 'old Kent,' already mentioned, is one ; and that capital piece of dialogue, between Owen Glendower and Hotspur, where Glendower tells him, that, when he was born, the ' front of heaven was full of fiery shapes ;' a conversation, which, if we except that between Beatrice and Benedict, is perhaps the finest example of dramatick energy, closeness and preservation of character, in mere dialogue, to be found in Shakspeare.

But why is it, that we are not offended with poetry from the mouth of Owen Glendower ? It is because we look for pomp and power, effort and parade in him. He pretends to be a sorcerer ; and after a time, would be likely to have a language peculiar to himself, a language that would appear natural for him, in proportion as it would appear unnatural for every body else. For a like reason, we receive the poetry of Kent. The people about him will not brook the language of common-sense ; and we are willing that he should reprove them in poetry.

But how very different is our reception of the poetry of Romeo, while he is making love to Juliet ; or the poetry of Macbeth, when he talks about the daggers—

———— unmannerly breeched with gore :

or that of Hamlet, when he says over a school-boy lesson about Jove, and Mars, and Mercury, at the very time when he is ready to die of a broken heart.

Through a-process of reasoning, somewhat like the preceding, have I pursued my way, till the conclusions above mentioned respecting simplicity of language and thought, in the application

(2) Mr. Farren, the celebrated English player, wrote a pamphlet in 1824, and published it accordingly, to prove that Hamlet was really mad. I am sometimes inclined to be of his opinion ; for there are passages in Hamlet, which force me to believe, that if Hamlet was not mad, Shakspeare was,—and all his commentators.

of both to tragedy, burst upon me with convincing power. Still I *may* be wrong—but I do not believe I am, now that I have Shakspeare himself on my side.

STAGE MURDERS, GHOSTS, &c. But we should not stop here. It is high time that another kind of poetry were done with on the stage—the poetry of attitude—of situation—of trick, stage-murders, &c. &c. &c. I believe that men are more affected, and more disturbed, by indistinctness, in the representation of what is preternatural, or even extraordinary, than by any degree of distinctness or circumstantiality.

To prove this, it would be only necessary to compare the dagger-scene with the banquet-scene of Macbeth; the invisible dagger with the visible ghost of Banquo.

I contend that men are more agitated, by seeing the agitation of another in such a case, than by seeing the *cause* of that agitation: in other words, that men are more agitated by seeing the agitation of Macbeth, in the dagger-scene, when they do *not* see the dagger, than they would be, if they saw it: or, than they are, when they *do* see the ghost of Banquo: I contend that if we were to see the hand-writing on the wall, or the spirit of the dead Samuel represented,(3) either in painting, or on the boards of a theatre, we should be more disturbed in the one case by looking into the eyes of the monarch, and beholding the inscription there, than we should by reading it upon the wall; and much more, in the other case, by the apparition of a shadow issuing dimly from the smoke and darkness, than by the substantial appearance of the best-painted or best-acted spirit, ever represented by man.

To enforce the above doctrine, I have written a tragedy, and made of the hero a guilty human creature, sorely afflicted; and troubled in all his faculties to such a degree, that he sees faces, and hears voices *which are invisible and inaudible to every body else*. Let some great actor play the part, allow the audience to behold him altogether alone upon the stage—in a wood—or a prison—at midnight(4)—perfectly rational in every other respect

(3) Alston has covered the shape and face of the spectre in his witch of Endor—why did he not cover the hand-writing on the wall, and leave the story to be told to us, by the countenances of the awe-struck multitude? Peradventure he has; for after changing his magnificent idea over and over again, till others have grown wealthy by working up what he has rejected, or by anticipating him in the execution of his boldest and most original thoughts (Martin for example, whose hand-writing on the wall was but the finishing of Alston's sketch) he is now employed with it in a new way.

(4) It may not be amiss to remark here, that the stage is never sufficiently darkened, to represent night; and that they are much mistaken, who believe total darkness to be well performed, when people whose very features are visible to the audience, go groping and stumbling about over the stage, as if they were acting blind-man's buff, with their eyes open. I may be wrong here too—but I have a

—Let him avoid all trick of attitude, and appear to the best of his ability, in patient, low and familiar conversation, with something invisible. Let them hear the sufferer at such a time, expostulating with vacancy—as if under a solemn persuasion of the reality of what he sees, in a low, quiet, natural voice, and to the best of his power, as if a spirit *were* standing at his elbow; and I will answer for the effect. I care not of what materials the audience are made; I care not how long they may have been accustomed to visible ghosts, and violent exhibitions of terror—I would put my right hand on the issue—my very life—that their blood would run colder to see this, than to see any number of visible ghosts, or any quantity of gesture and attitude, expressive of terror.

I would not have the actor appear to be taken by surprise; or rather, I would not have him appear, however the sight of the apparition may thrill him, as if he had *not* expected it: on the contrary, I would have him appear reconciled to it, and prepared for it, as a necessary and familiar, though awful and afflicting guardianship. He might be allowed to appear under a delusion, even to the multitude; but, it should be a profound, fixed and solemn belief, not a violent nor startling derangement,—a sudden oversetting of the senses with terror; for I would leave no temptation to outery or over-acting.

Men are affected in this way. They see what is not, and hear what is not—and as we know that agitation of mind will do this, and that guilt and sorrow agitate the mind, why may we not make use of our knowledge for the improvement of household-tragedy? Men have grown so familiar with apparitions of this kind, that they have been able, at last, not only to receive their visits without distress, but without strong emotion.

There is a case, well known in the medical world, of a German professor, who pursued a course of experiments with

notion that English tragedy will never be what it ought to be, till such things are done with.

We do not want much to see the face of a man, when he is about spilling the blood of another—at midnight. A dark lantern—a smothered cry—the shadow of a murderer, would be far more effectual. “Hark—didst thou not hear a noise?”—why should the *audience* hear a noise at such a time? why that *step* which Garrick allowed every body to hear, preparatory to the question? why not allow the multitude to see the effect of guilt in making “cowards of us all?” in making us hear and see where the innocent hear nothing, see nothing?

It is true, that we have become reconciled to a certain way of doing all these matters; but I hope to see the time, (and speedily,) when side-talking on the stage; the *side-speeches*, that require the audience to believe that all the other actors on the stage are deaf; as well as that kind of darkness, which requires of them to believe that all the other actors are blind; together with *standing* soliloquies and all extempore stilting, strutting and face-making, not indispensable to the part, shall be done with.

what appeared to him (although he knew at the time that he was under a delusion) to be a multitude of apparitions.(5)

Many examples among religious people might be mentioned in further proof—such as that of the Baron Swedenbourg; but they are not required. It is enough for our purpose, that this affecting malady is known to exist; that it is a kind of derangement, perfectly reconcilable to our notions of retributive providence upon guilt; that it is a kind, which has never been represented upon the stage; and a kind, which would be more effectual and less offensive in representation; more likely to move our commiseration, and less likely to harden our hearts, than any other kind of madness, or delusion, which we do see upon the stage.

The representation would be easier to the actor, (after one or two trials) than the wild and terrific madness of the drama; or that melancholy and pitiable derangement, shifting through every alternation of tenderness, alarm and sorrow, which is often met with in real life.

My design, to say all in a word, was to make of my hero a *haunted man*—a man with a spirit, of whom he was not much afraid, for his familiar companion. But another might avail himself of the same facts, to introduce a spirit of another sort—one of which the hero is afraid. It is enough to mention the idea—others may improve upon it in a thousand shapes.

SOLILOQUIES—LETTERS—CONFIDANTS. In the course of this enquiry into the origin of our sympathy for the heroes of the stage, it would not be wonderful if we should meet with some other absurdities in the established usage, and ask why they are allowed now, although they would seem to enjoy a self-perpetuating power.

We do not much like the idea of introducing a soliloquy, a confidential servant or a letter, for the purpose of making the audience acquainted with transactions, either past or future, which are in some way or other connected with the story. It often happens that the player is obliged to read aloud or to say aloud, in this manner, that which,—if he were what he pretends to be,—he would neither read aloud nor say aloud for his right hand: or, that he is obliged to say over to himself, in a soliloquy that every body may overhear, something which he must already know by heart; something which he cannot but know; and, in some cases, to tell his friend or servant, that which the friend or servant, from his obvious intimacy or situation, ought either to know already, or never to know at all.

(5) M. Nicolai of Berlin, whose narrative appeared some time ago in *Beasley's Search of Truth*, and in the *N. A. R.* is in proof.

It may be, and it really is, very difficult, for one to avoid these things entirely and at all times ; but then, it is not very difficult, when they *are* introduced, to render them somewhat more plausible than they generally are.

If you are not permitted, as a dramatic writer, to represent the whole life of a person at one time, like Shakspeare, in the *Winter's Tale* ; and if a tragedy of three or four hours long cannot be manufactured out of some incident, or some combination of incidents, which did not occupy more than the same number of hours, in real life, you may take some intermediate time, such as one day or three days : and connect the preceding transactions with those which are represented before the audience, so far as to make the whole plot of the play, and the history of the characters *intelligible*, without any such violations of truth or propriety.

In fact, you are obliged to do this—there would appear to be no other way ; for though you should repeat upon the stage a catastrophe which had occurred in real life, taking care to occupy precisely the same time in the representation, which the event had taken, when it occurred : still, if you would have the audience greatly moved by their compassion for the sufferers, you must give them some knowledge of their previous or after-history. This may be done far better by allusions, however, and by isolated facts, which the audience cannot help connecting with each other, than by any formal detail, in a soliloquy, a dialogue or a letter.

The history of the hero need not be *told* by any body—in any way ; and yet I am sure it would not be difficult so to manage the story, that every body, even the most inattentive would *infer* that history from the incidental remarks of other characters in the representation of the piece. It were better, perhaps, to explain too little, than too much. Hearers, like readers, love to make their own discoveries, to foresee, to anticipate, and to guess for themselves in tragedy, as in novels and riddles, wherever they can do it with tolerable ease or safety. Another subject may now be mentioned,

STAGE MURDERS. It is not a very uncommon thing to see the field of battle, after a catastrophe is gone through with, covered with dead men, whose chests continue to heave, until they are dragged off, or to find all the company at another time, grouping themselves into what the author has taken the liberty to call a picture, and waiting for the curtain to fall—sometimes, when the whole effect of the play depends upon the abrupt, quick termination of it.

I have seen this occur, and felt unpleasantly. Others have felt the same ; and asked why nothing more is done or said by

those, who, if they are not immediately concealed from the audience, must say or do something, or forfeit their characters.

Perhaps a disappointment or two of this nature, which no one would be willing to encounter a second time, may be the true cause of that uproar, which the people break out with at a theatre, just when they are supposed to be most overpowered with sympathy—just before the curtain falls. Were the effect produced upon them, which it is the whole object of author and player to produce, they would be profoundly still—at least for a minute or two after the catastrophe, as much as if they were spectators of an execution.

It was for this very reason, that I took the liberty some years ago of introducing a stage-direction, at the end of a play, which was written with a view to illustrate all these apparently unconnected propositions.

The hero received a blow from his father, whom he designedly provoked for the purpose—a mortal blow—staggered to his feet, and betrayed the secret of his relationship, by entreating a benediction. Now, if the parties were not immediately concealed from the audience, the whole effect of the catastrophe would be lost. The wonder was, why the father, in his consternation and affright, should remain silent; and that wonder would increase every moment they were left together on the stage. That they might be concealed immediately after the blow, it was necessary that the curtain should already have '*begun to descend.*'(6)

Another thing—It is common to see the hero of a play, and of course all the subordinate personages, put under the awkward necessity of coming and going, appearing and disappearing on the boards, without any apparent reason or necessity: and oftentimes we see the chief characters of the drama intruded upon every hour, by people who are neither invited, nor announced. They are even obliged in some cases to ring a bell, or go to the side of the stage, and cry, *what, ho! or who waits there?* in the depth of tragedy.

To avoid this—for very little things may destroy the whole effect of a fine scene, where the senses are in thralldom, a simple expedient was adopted; and the occasion *made* for the purpose of trying the experiment.

The heroine, if she wanted her attendant, touched,—not the bell-handle—but the ornament of a piece of furniture; and the audience heard—not the jingling of a bell—nor the question of, '*who waits there?*' but the sound of music afar off. Such an

(6) Something of the sort, I have been lately told, occurs in a German tragedy: but I have never seen it.

expedient may be not common to be sure in real life—but which of the two would be most effectual in tragedy, or serious comedy?

It was a ticklish affair no doubt, though rather better than a submission to the common absurdities of the stage; that of making a hero call for his own servant in a moment of distraction; or that of suffering a servant or a friend to enter, not because the hero had sent for him, nor because the friend or servant had a right to come, whether he were sent for or not; but because he was wanted by the author—and must be had on any terms.

To every kind of stage-murder, I am decidedly opposed. It ought always to be avoided, if possible. It is more often ludicrous or frightfully absurd, than effectual. I may appeal to the murder of Duncan, for proof. How awful is the solitude of the stage in that play, while the destroyer is at the work of death: and how much more awful than it would be, if we were allowed to see the monarch a-bed as we do Desdemona, while the murderer was dethroning an immortal spirit.

And yet, owing to the character of my hero, and the design of the play, I found it quite impossible to avoid one stage-murder.

The son, it was intended from the first, should die by the hand of his own profligate father. The son was to know his father—and provoke him to the blow—but the father was not to know the son, whom he had forsaken—dishonoured—outraged, and put to death, till it was too late.

Originally, it was designed to bring about the catastrophe in another way; to seat the wronged son face to face with his proud father, from whose hand he had knowingly received and swallowed a mortal drug—when there was no longer any help or hope for either—and to make him tell over the wrongs and sorrows—the humiliations, trials, and indignities, which had grown out of his illegitimacy, and the neglect of his father. But a little consideration was enough to show the difficulty—the absurdity I might say of such a plan. The speediest poison would not effect the purpose without a loss of time; it would leave too much opportunity for talking; it had already been done in Beverly, who takes it—not out of a richly-chased goblet, heavy with rough gold or silver, which might suit the dignity of the occasion—but out of a pocket-phial, as one would physic, before the eyes of the audience. These were insurmountable objections to poison.

The story of Savage and his unnatural mother would have been sufficient authority for making the scene effectual; and I

was greatly tempted to try ; but having changed the mode of death, it appeared better to abandon the conversation between the father and son, as not likely to occur *after* he was mortally wounded ; and as wholly inefficient, if it should take place *before*—while he was apparently in the full possession of his power and faculties. To make it effectual, the father should repent, and wish to save his dying son, after it was too late.

There were some other things in the play referred to—a mere experiment—which might appear irreconcilable with probability. There was a dream related in one act ; and the fulfilment of that very dream was represented in another—a strange thing to be sure, and rather inconsistent with vulgar notions of probability. And yet, I undertake to say that even this might be done, without shocking the audience ; and that in reality they do see such fulfilment, occur every day.

Strange and improbable the two facts would appear, so long as they were considered separately and distinctly, but no longer. There is nothing violent nor unnatural in them, when we see how they are brought about.

The principal character told her dream upon the stage. It was of a person, whom she had met years and years before, habited in a particular dress—and by whom she and others had been *recently terrified*. A page hears her tell it—and mentions it afterwards *by accident*, and without suspecting the truth, to the very individual referred to.

Hearing that she still dreams of him, though under a different shape, the hero determines to avail himself of the power it would give him, by appearing to her *in that very dress*. He has the means of doing this, by a ring, which had been given to him by mistake, instead of his own.

He does appear, and without any outrage upon probability. But—appearing *as he does*—*when he does*—in the very dress—at midnight—in the chapel, whither they have gone for their untimely marriage, is it wonderful that others, who knew nothing of the process by which this event had been brought about, or how the two events were connected together, should mistake the whole for an apparition ?

Let any body dream of another, in a strange dress. Let him encounter some one the next day, habited in a like dress, and he may be the last person in the world to discover the mystery. It may be very simple—a mere trick devised by some one, to whom he had mentioned his dream ; but to him, it would appear altogether preternatural.

Perhaps there was too much of a German spirit in the play, too much trick, stratagem, and metaphysical refinement. It may

be undignified, for a great tragedian, to become so much of a melo-dramatic spectacle, as the hero was required to be, under his different disguises. But the truth of it is, that the spirit of the age would have it so, and will have it so for a little time longer. It will not endure simple tragedy. It would not, in the time of Shakspeare ; and it never will, but by a gradual tempering down of the present extravagancies, in poetry, spectacle and uproar.

But, during the whole course of his transformation, it should be observed, that he had no occasion to change his voice, or disguise his face—he had only to be silent or to change his garb.

And, perhaps, there might seem to be rather too much of the modern school, in his character. But there were great, and I think *such* differences between him and most of the ‘half knight, half felon’ gentry, as would entitle him to be considered of a better lineage.

He was not the enemy of mankind. He hated nobody. He made war, only because other men would have it so—because they would not let him be at peace. Being of illegitimate birth, he did seem to belong to no community ; and in a measure, to owe no allegiance to man.

For many a year, in one shape or another, he had been watching over the woman he loved when he was a boy ; the woman who had abandoned him, when she came to understand the infamy of his birth.

When the play opened, this woman was about to be married. The hero had resolved to appear to her once more, and be governed in all his future designs, by what he might then discover ; to ascertain if he could whether she was about to marry for love or ambition. But in the progress of this enquiry, while he was fluctuating between pride and affection, doubt and love, he came accidentally to the knowledge of his birth. From that moment, he is another man. His whole character undergoes an instantaneous transformation. He has done with love : he cares no more for the dream of his youth. He has no longer any wish, or hope, or design, save that of dying by the hand of his own father—a lesson to the princely and the profligate.

In the prosecution of this design, although the hero could not certainly be called either a good or a wise man, there was about him nevertheless that kind of simple, energy, and strength of determination, which the bad seldom, and the foolish never exhibit.

But, in the progress of the play referred to, another thing of some value in dramatic theory was attempted. It relates to the *mode* of exciting sympathy for the stage. There are two ways

of doing this. You may either conceal your design, withhold every explanation, prevent the audience from anticipating, and strike them at last with the unexpected catastrophe: or you may pursue a directly opposite course, betray your plot in advance, furnish them with hints and explanations, which are supposed to be withheld from the characters of the piece, and encourage a continual anticipation.

Both have their advantages; and both, of course, their disadvantages.

By the first method, telling the audience no more than you tell your characters, in the disclosure of the piece, you keep them both in the same situation. You show no partiality to either; you agitate both in the same way, at the same time, and by the same contrivances.

By the last, you excite one train of sensations in the audience; and another, entirely different, in the characters of the piece. You prevent the audience from sympathizing in the perplexity, sorrow and apprehension of the characters; and you hinder the characters from playing to emotions correspondent with their own—which, considering the contagious influence of sympathy, is a great help to the player—one that should never be relinquished without a decided equivalent.

By the first plan, you are sure to excite in the audience, the same kind of emotions, which are supposed to be felt by the characters. By the latter, the emotions, which you excite in the audience, are not only different in degree, but in kind. There are those who love to begin with a story-book at the wrong end—to read the last page first—to see before-hand how the whole is to terminate. Others you cannot offend more than by telling them how a story ends. But we have plays to make for both.

Whenever by any premature disclosure, no matter how adroitly effected, the audience come to know that, which if the parties upon the stage were supposed to know it, would alter their deportment, it is impossible that the audience can experience any similar sensations to those of the parties: it is impossible, when the audience know the cause of all the distress they see, that they can sympathize with, however much they may compassionate them, whose very distress proceeds from their ignorance of that, which the audience are allowed to know.

The audience may feel a certain degree of anxiety and concern, to know how such misapprehension will terminate; but it is wholly unlike, and inferior to, the anxiety and concern of those who are upon the stage.

Few people perhaps ever call to mind while sitting at a the-

atrical representation, that the actors are of course perfectly prepared for every thing—and able to foresee every thing.

If they did, would they ever have the patience to sit out the performance of a drama, the whole interest of which may depend upon the supposition that the actors are not prepared for a single circumstance, and foresee nothing?

At such a time, the faculty of anticipation in the audience, would seem to be inert. It either refuses to exercise itself at all; or it exercises itself in aiding the design of the author and actor by furthering the mystery of the plot, and by practising upon the other faculties. This will always happen, where the author does not, by untimely disclosure, put that faculty of the audience upon a separate course of investigation for itself.

Let us take an example. One illustration may be worth a whole volume of abstract reasoning. The audience, at the performance of Othello, see how the handkerchief is obtained. Othello does not. The faculty of anticipation is instantly awakened. The audience foresee the incidents that follow; and therefore cannot sympathize with Othello, whose distress proceeds from his ignorance of that, which they know.

And so too, where the audience see the ring concealed, which Essex had given to his intercessor, for his royal mistress, it would be quite impossible for them to sympathize with the anxiety of Elizabeth, which proceeds from misapprehension, and ignorance of that which they know and rightly apprehend.

So where Edmund the bastard pricks himself with his own sword, that his blood may corroborate his testimony against his brother, the audience do not feel the same kind of anxiety or indignation, which the actors who represent Gloster and Edgar are supposed to feel.

Perhaps however there *may* be cases, where the emotion excited in the hearts of the audience, by revealing or explaining to them, that which is withheld, or supposed to be withheld from the personages of the drama, may be as powerful, as thrilling, and as delightful as that which would be produced by a contrary course; but then, it is never *likely* to be so; and probably is not so, in any but very extraordinary cases.

We are all more or less affected by sympathy. We laugh *when* others laugh, and *because* others laugh. And those who have great sensibility weep when others weep, and for the same excellent reason. Women and children do this continually, without troubling their hearts about the cause. An army of men will be seized with a panic, no one of whom can tell why; and a large assembly of men and women will burst into a spontaneous and involuntary outcry at the happening of that which, had it happen-

ed to any one of them alone, would have excited little or no emotion. All these are the effects of sympathy.

In fact, our most delightful and profound emotions, whether solitary or social, are generally the result of that strange moral contagion, which is called sympathy. A tale of suffering, whether it be one of reality or invention, will always go more directly to the heart, when it is calculated to excite the same kind of emotions in the reader which it represents the characters to be affected with. Hence it is, that, in the dread of anticipation, which is nothing more than a dread of knowing that which may hinder us from sympathizing, step by step, with a sufferer, we are so unwilling to be told what the conclusion of a story is, before we have read it through. For ourselves, we cannot bear to open the last page of a book, until we have come to it fairly, arm in arm, with the hero, or heroine, or author, and would not readily forgive any one, who should give us a hint of the catastrophe. I believe it very important therefore, for an author to make his readers, or audience, go side by side with his characters. If we see one crying bitterly, and at the same time happen to know something which, if he knew it, we are certain would make him laugh as heartily, we cannot possibly sympathize in his grief. And so too, if we see one laughing heartily, under a persuasion, which we know to be false and wrong, we cannot laugh with him—we are inclined rather to laugh *at* him, and on any serious occasion to pity him. Two or three short illustrations may show this more plainly; and perhaps go far to establish the expediency of keeping up the same kind of emotions in all parties at the same time.

We see a person trying to entertain a company who are laughing at him; we see him breaking his neck and bruising his shins over the chairs and tables, like Oliver Goldsmith, after he had been to see the performance of the ape, and mistaking the boisterous merriment of the people about him for applause. *He* may laugh heartily; and so may we—but the causes of our laughter are not more different than our objects. There is no sympathy between us.

But let us take another and a more dignified illustration. The father of a family has risked every thing he had on earth—all that his wife and children have to depend upon, in some wild adventure—a throw at hazard for example. By and by we see him transported with joy, laughing deliriously, under what *we* happen to know is altogether a delusion—a belief that his fortune is made—that he has drawn a prize which *we* know to be a blank. In such a case, if we know that he has lost every thing on earth, are we not far more inclined to weep than to laugh? We may feel, and feel very sensibly too; but where is our sympathy? Our emo-

tions may be as *strong* as his—but are they at all *like* his? Does our commiseration, our anxiety, our concern, resemble his tumultuous joy? And if the scene had been so constructed as to operate upon us, and produce the same delusion upon us which we see it produces upon him, should we not have experienced a greater variety and a deeper sort of emotion?

Behold this man. He is on trial for his life. The jury have just entered the box. His ears are ringing with strange sounds—his eyes wandering, and his face bloodless with expectation. The jury are called upon for their verdict. It is rendered in a low voice—guilty. But the prisoner, to our astonishment and dismay, falls down upon his knees before the majesty of Heaven and Earth, and pours out his whole soul in a convulsion of thanksgiving. It is evident therefore, that he has misunderstood the verdict of guilty for *not* guilty.

What are our feelings now? Where is our sympathy? And who of us all would have the heart or the power to undeceive the poor fellow? We may shut our eyes or turn pale, as we see another going towards him, and pray within the depth of our souls that he may be speedily set right—but who of us would be the man to set him right? His heart is full of joy; but ours—it is full of every thing *but* joy. Apply this to a like scene of tragedy, where the hero is operated upon by one set of emotions, the audience by another.

Emotion can only propagate itself; and however we may be affected by the suffering of another, if we do not feel the same kind of suffering that he does, however different it may be in degree, we do not feel *sympathy*. We may feel pity, sorrow, or alarm; but our emotions are not properly sympathetic.

Let us now recur, for a moment, to the examples above mentioned. Suppose that the audience were not permitted to know any thing more than Othello, or Elizabeth, or Edgar, or Gloster knows, would not their feelings be more like those of Othello, Elizabeth, Edgar and Gloster? Would not the sympathy of the audience be more profound? or more properly speaking, would they not feel sympathy then, where they feel none at present? Would they not better understand the actors, and participate more cordially and sincerely in their emotions, than they do now?

If they knew no more than Othello how the handkerchief came into the hands of Cassio, would not the agony of Othello appear more natural; the deception of Iago more natural; and the whole catastrophe much more affecting?

Is it not the nature of all emotion to perpetuate itself; to multiply its own resemblances? And where it fails to do this, is it not a proof that nature has been thwarted or counteracted?

When we see the distress of Othello and Elizabeth, without feeling any correspondent distress, but only a sort of perplexed and confused sensation of inquietude and curiosity, is it not a proof that nature has been turned aside in the course of her demonstration ?

Is it not material, that wherever the feelings of men are to be disturbed, every heart should be prepared in the same way, and operated upon in the same way, particularly if the *design* is to affect every heart in the same way ? And is not the enjoyment which people feel at a dramatic exhibition—at a concert, spectacle, oration, or any thing—always proportioned to the universality and sameness of the sentiments and emotions felt among the audience ; and to the co-operation of the performers and audience, in producing that sameness ?

Must not the audience, and the actor, or the orator, or the singer, reciprocally aid each other—like burning-glasses ; catching and reflecting the flashes that issue from each other ; and multiplying them in every direction, until the atmosphere is full of enthusiasm, and every heart throbbing with a kindred emotion ?

That which we call sympathy, so instantaneous, wonderful and secret as it is, and so powerful, is only a sort of moral electricity. But for the pure transmission of this quick, mysterious and invisible fluid, through a multitude of hearts, it is indispensable that every one should have been prepared and purified, by a similar process ; and not only that, but that no one of the whole should be able either to change the direction, or alter the properties of the fluid :

But so exquisitely delicate is this kind of electricity, that a change of temperature is a change of medium, likely of itself to prevent the communication from one heart to another. One single individual in a large multitude may intercept the flash of enthusiasm—and throw it back with destructive power upon the heart of the operator.

THE DRAMA....NO. I.

Strictures on Dramatic writing, theatrical representation, and the laws of the Drama generally ; interspersed with remarks on writers and performers, in illustration.

OUR people have not done much for the drama, except by insisting upon a steady supply of good and bad English actors, in the proportion of about five hundred of the latter to one of the former ; by building theatres all over our country, some of which are superior to the second class of London theatres ; and by playing here whatever is played there without much regard either to expense or propriety—even to the coronation of George the Fourth, or Tom and Jerry, although the most popular performance never went so far probably as the tenth representation during a whole year with us, and would seldom bear to be repeated for three successive nights, even in our largest cities ; while in England it may have run every night for several months, before it was put aside for another season. Almost every body here may go to see a fine actor once, if newly imported for a particular purpose ; but very few would ever go to see the finest a second time in the same part, and probably not one in five hundred even of those who haunt the theatres, would take the trou-

ble to see him a third time. It is not so in the mother country. Night after night you may see the very same faces there. They love to see how the actor holds out ; how he varies, and how he improves ; where he does a thing mechanically, and where by impulse ; in a word, they love as much to compare him with himself, as with his rivals.

Owing to this remarkable difference in the habit of our community, who seldom care to see the same actor twice in the same part, unless after a long interval, there is a lack of steady patronage here, which no increase of population would ever be able to atone for, without a material change of sentiment among the playgoers, even of our largest towns. Nor should it be otherwise—our people are fond enough now of the trumpery they are fed with by common players.

But there is little encouragement for dramatic writing in our country, for another reason. Our theatres are supplied with all the London pieces for nothing, and what is entitled to yet more consideration, *after they are successful*. What manager therefore can afford to give any thing for a native play, beyond the profit of a third night's representation—which would be rather an equivocal reward ; particularly when the play cannot be adapted to the stage without considerable expense, trouble and risk—your new author is not to be fobbed off with old scenery—or has been got up in a hurry by some youth who never saw a play, perhaps never read a play in all his life. We have known such a case to occur.

But the drama, the legitimate and awful drama—I do not mean the bastard issue of caricature and show, of barbarous pageantry and spectacle—is the generous, high-hearted offspring either of savage strength, walking with a loud voice among the unvisited solitudes of the human heart, or of poetry and eloquence under a high state of cultivation—perhaps under the highest, wandering about the earth, like the animated statuary of Olympus. The characters of the true drama, must be always either men or gods ; men as they are in the glory and power of uncorrupt and semi-barbarous nature, or gods as they are when the licentious hierarchy of a bad heaven are forever treading the stage with the counterfeit bearing of humanity. Little should be expected therefore in the way of dramatic authorship from a people who were never barbarians ; who, notwithstanding they are of yesterday, are already able to enjoy the wisdom and hear the music of every gone-by age ; and who, although they are admitted to the fellowship of the most cultivated nations, are still a great way behind them in that irritating, inward sense of beauty, which betrays itself in the very speech and air, and will not be satisfied

with any thing short of perfection. We are precisely in that state now which disqualifies alike for the natural and for the artificial. Our Gothic majesty departed from us—no, not from *us*—but from our fathers, four centuries ago; our day of subduing refinement, of enervating luxury, has not yet arrived—thanks be to God.

But we are not to abandon all hope even for this. Great things may still be done for the drama *here*, though we are not in a situation to do every thing. There is virtue enough left for the powerful to work with—a good constitution at the bottom of all the disease they see. And if they will but take advantage of the growing disinclination for theatrical entertainment, now to be observed among the well-educated, the gifted, and the pure of heart, and even among the fashionable of the mother country, though not *there* because of the corruptions of the theatre, it may be gradually and entirely changed, and perhaps converted into what it never has been yet, however the advocates of the stage may argue, nor ever will be, without a speedy and thorough reformation, a great moral preacher for those who are never to be found in the way of any other moral preaching. There is yet another ground of hope for us. With our national vanity—vanity we say, for it wants the healthiness and strength of national pride; with our belief in the existence of a national literature among us, what should prevent our having, at least a national drama; a drama, that is peculiar to our country and characteristic of ourselves?

We are already like no other people on earth. We are undergoing a thorough and mighty revolution, without perceiving or suspecting it. We multiply so fast, and the means of living are so plentiful with us, that we cannot be expected to march in the common highway of nations. With little or nothing to fear, what should hinder us from going through a course of experiments in every branch of literature as well as politics? For ourselves, we believe that the day is not far off, when we shall see nothing but *domestic tragedies—prose-tragedies*, in possession of the stage; founded altogether upon the incidents and business of republican, every-day life. We believe too, that ere this generation shall have passed away, our theatres will be purged of rank, title, verse, and that childish love we see now in every thing that is played, whether serious or comic, and without which it is believed that no play would be tolerated. Our comedies were originally written, as the French are now, in rhyme; after that, as our tragedies are, in blank verse. Now they are written in prose. Have we not gained by the last change, even more than by the first? What should we say now to a comedy in rhyme?

But the French still write their tragedies with rhyme ; we, ours, in blank verse ; the Germans a few of theirs in prose. The French therefore have not taken so much as the first step toward the nature of language in real life ; and we but one, where we have as much reason for taking the second as for taking the first, while the Germans have gone almost the whole length of what is required by our theory. So was it once with our novels, romances and story-books. For a time, they were crowded with giants, dwarfs, enchanters and hobgoblins. After this, they were haunted with ghosts, and peopled with captive princes, lords and ladies, who were always on stilts, and never allowed to do or say any thing as other people do. Where was the author then, with courage to call upon our sympathies in favour of domestic or familiar life ? Yet who would endure a novel or a story now, which related only to love-sick princes and princesses ? Even yet, however, we are not altogether free—our heroes and heroines are still creatures of high rank, or of gentle blood—for that's the phrase ; and few are they who dare to make the mere men and women of the world pass before us in a story.

As it was with novels and romances, so was it with tragedies, comedies and histories, throughout the whole world of literature. As it is with novels, romances, and comedies now, so it will be with tragedies hereafter. The incidents will be such as every man may hope or dread to see. They will be described in common language,—that is, however beautiful and however strong it may be, in the language of life ; not perhaps of common every-day life, such as we hear in the market-place or by the way-side ; but in the language of that life which is intended to be pictured for us. In other words, men will not be expected to say what they have to say, either in poetry or blank verse, merely because they are heroes weighed down to the earth by calamity. The catastrophe will be more of a domestic nature ; the business that of the inside even of palaces ; for it is there, and there only that we can judge of a hero, or of a nation, or sympathise with either. All men are alike in their crowns and sceptres. Would you see the difference between man and man ?—strip them of their robes of state. On high occasions, in the high places of the earth, with a nation looking at them, men are altogether artificial. They are no better than stage-players. Napoleon himself was nothing but a player-king, when he sat all the day long in one particular attitude to receive the deputies in the Champ de Mai. No wonder he was charged with having taken lessons of Talma. But upon the sick-bed—at home—sitting with a wife or child, and nobody to keep guard over their kingship—in solitude—they are human beings—they are men.

Yes, we hope to see the day, and we believe it is not far off, when the true nature of the drama will be understood *here*, if no where else ; when its purposes and powers will be consecrated anew to the great uses of morality. Think what an everlasting brightness would settle on the burial-place of that man, who should venture to tear away forever all the encumbering magnificence, and costly spectacle, and corrupting superfluity, from the great, simple, stern spirit of the drama ! purging her habitation as with fire, and consuming the machinery of her whole toy-shop to ashes. For ourselves, we would not drive her from among us—if it could be helped. But we would set up for her a new dwelling-place, endow her priesthood anew, and consecrate them wholly and completely and before the eyes of all the earth, to the business of every-day humanity. One of two things must be done immediately, or the lofty dominion of the stage, whether for good or evil, is done with among us. The powerful must gather together and tear up her old foundations, and build her a new place, higher up than ever, upon some inaccessible height, where overlaid with pomp, and obscured with a continual fluctuation of shadow, darkness and mist, she may spend her life among precipices and clouds, leaving men and women to marvel and guess at her unapproachable, unintelligible shape ; taking from her all the affecting signs of humanity—all her simple and affectionate ways,—all that brings her near to the human heart—making her altogether spiritual, above and beyond the fellowship of our nature ; they must either do this, or they must come together and charm her down from her mid-way abiding place, to the green earth, the purple water, and the shadowy wilderness of life ; to the more familiar household places of earth, where they that love her would always hope to find her.

If we recall the history of the stage here, we shall find that together with a few poor tragedies, our country has brought forth, more in play than in labour, a hundred or two of wretched farces and worse comedies ; every character, every peculiarity, every sentiment, and every provincialism of which, instead of being American or characteristic of Americans, were English, or Scotch, or Irish, even while they were intended to be American ; and two or three of considerable worth, which, but for the base appetite of the day would have been established in favour, though they are now forgotten along with their titles and their authors. The fact is, we are inclined to believe that what is called broad situation has been the death of the familiar English drama. Every part is overcharged for the gratification of the mob. The deaf multitude are to be ministered to, soothed and flattered, instead of being made wiser and better, while they are off their

guard, by the help of that engine, which is never stirred by a strong hand, no, nor touched, but the very depths of the human heart are stirred with it, for joy or sorrow. Every thing is offered up in sacrifice to them; truth, character, incident and moral—if moral there should happen to be; or any other substitute therefor—than that which breaks out here and there in a wretched clap-trap, or a schoolboy flourish, generally the after-thoughts of a friend, or the interpolations of a manager, to counteract the tendency of a play, the whole scope and bearing of which is to show that husbands, fathers and lovers are a kind of cattle whom it is the duty of spirited wives, daughters and mistresses to overreach and betray. There being a great love of mystery abroad—plays are altogether a mystery now. The plot is a mystery, the very language a mystery. People go to the theatre for the declared purpose of seeing what they never did see, and what they *never expect to see any where else*. They do not go to study themselves in a great illuminated mirror, as broad and as deep as the sea; before the face of which whole generations may walk for ever and ever, without crowding each other, or startling the spectator with a sense of antiquity, or change, or anachronism. No—but they journey thither merely to see what is never to be met with, nor heard of in real life.

Tragedies and comedies both, when properly prepared, are *razéed* into three-act pieces; and every act peradventure into what were anciently the fair proportions of a scene. Characters are made by a particular sort of dress; or by giving the individual a phrase or two, which he keeps repeating, *nobody knows why*, as he goes about hither and thither, *nobody knows wherefore*, from the beginning to the end of the piece. But the mob enjoy the joke; it is the only thing perhaps they are able to anticipate, after the character has opened his mouth once, and the only thing they are able to remember after they have got away. The sin of this may be charged to Shakspeare. But for his ‘that’s the humour of it,’ and ‘sweet Anne Page,’ in a play, which, take it altogether, has more the appearance of a modern manufacture, got up to order, than any thing else he ever wrote—almost every character but Falstaff’s having a decidedly modern air, and that as we all know was done for Elizabeth by contract;—but for the everlasting repetition of these watch-words by Shakspeare, we never should have been troubled with *characters*, which are made, now by saying at every step and pause of the dialogue, ‘that’s your sort, keep moving,’ or ‘thank ye, good sir, I owe you one,’ or ‘pro-di-gi-ous,’ or ‘lots o’ this, and lots o’ that;’ and now, by talking forever about watches, or heraldry, or his late majesty of blessed memory; mere tricks that are borne with by the multitude as a

substitute for all that is valuable, or in other words, for all that is worth preserving, or worth representing in character. Not that people are never found in real life, who are very, very tiresome—nor that others do not talk by the year about watches and heraldry—nor that we may not see in the public highway, many a man who is to be distinguished only by a pet-phrase, or a strange hat, a by-word, or a big nose. But are such people to be made characters of? to be worked up for the stage? Because they are insupportable in life, are they to be made immortal? Are they to be dramatized for such things? Have we come to this, that the purveyors of the stage, authors, actors, and the stage itself, are to be made use of to perpetuate *such* individuality? Are these wretched automata, *characters*? Do they deserve to be so regarded? If so, any body may turn off characters by the parish. A label on the forehead, or a phrase in the mouth; a scar on the face, or a hump at the back were enough. They may do for a bungler, to be sure, like an obtrusive wart, or a well-known hair-lip for a poor painter, not merely to corroborate and secure, but to constitute a likeness; but they are unworthy of such men as Sir Walter Scott and a few others, on whom the small writers of the day depend for a supply of what are called *characters*, both for the stage and the closet; for the poem, the play and the story-book.

But there is another stumbling-block in our way. We do not so much want originality, as originality of a particular kind, which we have not, and are not likely to have, unless we are made to perceive the deficiency by reproach. We are prone to imitate the English—yet if we consider the subject seriously, their manners and our manners, their habits of life and ours, we must acknowledge that what would be well suited to them is not likely to be well suited to us. We are untitled plebeians—or rather we profess to be so; they are a nation of aristocrats, from the highest to the lowest; for even the lowest, so long as he has a drop of blood in him, will claim relationship with somebody whom it is the duty of all Englishmen to revere on account of his rank. We are comparatively a nation of brothers, between whom a great inheritance was divided but the other day. Inequalities exist to be sure; and they should exist for the encouragement of industry and virtue; but there are no such inequalities as are entailed there, established by law and perpetuated forever; no hereditary, unforfeitable and indestructible supremacy. Instead of imitating the writers of the mother country therefore, and crowding our books and plays with nobility, and the doings of a nobility; satisfied with being original here and there by a phrase, or a name, or a stage-trick, why not leave their path entirely, and

betake ourselves to another? We have material enough in our society for every purpose; we may not, and have not indeed, many humourists; but we have a plenty of *characters*, and characters peculiar to our nation, ready to be worked up, without resorting to mere individuality or idiosyncrasy.

The character of our literature must and will depend for a long while yet, much more upon its originality than upon any thing else. No matter how excellent an author may be, if there is any imitation to be perceived, any borrowing or copying, though it be from the best of English authors, or even from the best of English schools, his reputation, we may be sure, will be neither large nor lasting. But on the contrary, if he is bold and original, simple and strong, or even extravagant and strong, he will find favour at first with all who understand the language of nature and peculiarity; and will grow in favour with every age that cares about a *national* literature, either for itself or others. We depend much upon what is said of our books and authors by the men of Europe, and altogether too much upon what is said of them at London and Edinburgh. But the men of Europe do not want American varieties of what is substantially English. They do not care for European flowers and plants from our soil, so much as they do for flowers and plants which are peculiar to our country, indigenous to the New World—plants and flowers, the virtues and beauties, or the evil properties of which, are unlike those of any thing which they are familiar with at home.

There is yet another subject, upon which, though the very name were enough to drive a light reader away, like the mention of political economy, we believe there is yet much to be said, though that much, we believe, might be said in a page or two at the most. We allude to the *Unities*;—having an idea that they might often be more strictly observed with advantage than they *ever* are now. But we have only to say here, that in our opinion the liberties which are allowed dramatic authors with respect to time and place, are already greater than they should be; and that we believe they might be abridged, not only without mischief, but with real advantage to the drama. To show that this may be done, we ourselves have *constructed* two tragedies, one of which requires the spectator to acquiesce in the representation, not of twenty years, nor of three days, but of *one day*; while the other would occupy precisely the same number of hours on the stage, *that are supposed to pass in the story*.

But there is another evil—another and a more overshadowing despotism still, to make war with. We refer to the language of the drama. It is far too poetical for the stage. It would be no very difficult matter to show, from the highest authority, that

what the world receive for superb writing or fine poetry, is altogether out of place in the drama ; that all embellishment, exaggeration, or splendour of imagery and thought, are absurd to the last degree in the pathetic, the impassioned or the solemn of tragedy, and only to be endured in the descriptive passages, where the character may be supposed to have both opportunity and inclination for making poetry, for preparation and for rehearsal ; or where it is intended as a rebuke for the untimely extravagance or exaggeration of another. As for example, where Kent, in *Lear*, speaks of—

————— the wreath of radiant fire
On flickering Phœbus' front.

Here, it is altogether proper and suitable ; but it would not have been so, had he burst into such extemporaneous poetry, without any similar provocation.

We believe that men do not, in any case, talk poetry, while they are much in earnest ; nor ever, when they are taken by surprise : that when poetical expressions are put into the mouth of a man, under the influence of strong passion, or feeling, they are absurd and foolish, exactly in proportion to the depth and sincerity of his passion, or feeling ; and a correspondent outrage upon all our experience of the human heart : that when a person talks very beautifully under pain or sorrow, it is always a sign, not only of great preparation, but of insincerity, even to the very multitude ; and that, so universal is this opinion every where, notwithstanding the mischievous prejudices in favour of poetry and rhetoric, which incline us to forgive them wherever they appear, that it would in all probability be fatal for any human creature, while his character or life was in great jeopardy, to make what is called a fine speech in his own behalf.

An eloquent speech he might make—for the true eloquence of spoken language is always familiar, simple and strong—and always destitute of ornament, exactly in proportion to the solemnity of the occasion, and the sincerity of the speaker. But the eloquence of written language is always the reverse.

Compare the eloquence of old men, women, and little children, when it brings the tears into your eyes, with that which men usually call eloquence : nay, compare the eloquence of all mankind, while they are grievously beset with suffering, or sorrow, or calamity—with the eloquence of the same persons, after such suffering, sorrow and calamity, are all over and gone. Compare what they say with what they write : and compare what they have said, at the time of their suffering, with what they have said after their suffering was over ; and you will find in every case, that their language on paper, and their language after their suffer-

ing is over, were most poetical. And why?—Because they have had leisure and repose for exaggeration; and because they no longer feel very deeply.

The spoken eloquence of all people under suffering, is unpremeditated, natural even while running into exaggeration; unqualified—incoherent—and very affecting: sometimes it is all broken up, and so full of repetition, that if it were written down, it would appear unintelligible; and yet, under the articulation of one whose mouth trembled with emotion, it may have been unspeakably eloquent.

The written eloquence of all people, on the contrary, is full of pomp and poetry; characterized by a splendour of diction, and a want of simplicity, exactly in proportion to the talents of the writer, and the time that he has had for preparation.

The first is the language of men, while they are unhappy; the last, that of the same men, after they have ceased to be unhappy.

But upon the stage, people are supposed to *be* unhappy—not merely to *have been* so. How absurd therefore, to put into their mouths that very language, which is never heard from people while they *are* unhappy.

A man may tell you, it is very true, under the pressure of great pain, that he is ready to go distracted; or that something abides upon him with a crushing weight. But the moment he does so, you know very well that he is in no danger, either of going distracted or of being crushed. Under a sharp tooth-ache, or the weight of half a hundred upon his chest, this might be his language; but increase the one to agony, and quadruple the other, so that there is much more likelihood of his being crushed, or of going distracted, and you will probably hear no complaint at all—most assuredly none of a poetical nature.

Let him at such a time, assure you that his heart is absolutely exhausted; his brain afire, and it is ten to one that you would be inclined to leave him to his fate, assured, in your own soul, that the weight and pain were not likely to do him any serious injury.

Are these things true? or are they not?—If true, under what pretence is it, we pray you, that rich and poetical language is put into the mouths of men, while they are to appear in a state of actual suffering, excitement, or distraction? and while we are called upon to believe in their convulsions of joy and sorrow—or in their deep, inexpressible and inarticulate woe?

It were idle to repeat, that passion is always poetical; that when people suffer, they seek to give others an idea of their suffering by extravagant phraseology; because, however true this may be to a certain extent, and in a certain way, it is not true when applied to that suffering, and that passion, which are sufficiently profound and sincere for dramatic representation.

Nor would it be less idle to say, that if we desire to make another feel, by acting or speaking, we ourselves must exaggerate our feeling—or feel extravagantly; as if that law would prove, that they who pretend to feel—in whatever language they may choose to express themselves—will always make others feel just in proportion to their poetical extravagance; or, in proportion as they exaggerate their feeling.

The people of the stage have come at last into a belief, which they express by a maxim, that great feeling is a disqualification for fine speaking and fine acting. Let us have the counterfeit, not the reality, they say, and say wisely: But then they go further, and say what is not so wise—Let us have whatever we have with as little feeling as possible. If you mean to act well, feel nothing. The less you feel, the more excellent will be your acting. And yet this extraordinary paradox may have much truth in it. If an actor were to feel *all* that he pretends to feel, there would be no merit in his *acting*—for there would be no *acting* at all. Nay, if he felt a fiftieth part of what he is often called upon to express, he would forget his part—spurn the language—and set the audience at naught.

And so too, it would be idle to quote the poetry of scripture, or that of the oriental nations. Because all poetry except that of the drama, is written for singing, recitation, or reading, not for talking: while that poetry about which we are now arguing is written chiefly, if not altogether, for the purpose of being *talked*.

Still however, it may be worth our while to enquire whether passion is or is not given to poetry? And whether it is or is not a fact, that suffering is prone to exaggeration, and that exaggeration provokes our sympathy.

But, let us first ascertain what poetry and exaggeration are.

There will be no great difficulty in this; for those who define poetry, while they are arguing for that poetry which they imagine to be the legitimate language of passion, always give examples of beautiful exaggeration; so that for the purpose of our present enquiry there will be no unfairness in considering poetry and beautiful exaggeration as convertible terms.

Men, having found that all people under a certain degree of pain or sorrow are prone to exaggeration, have concluded, not very irrationally, that the greater their pain and sorrow, the greater will be their exaggeration. In this they are mistaken, as we have already shown by the example of the man under a great pressure and a great pain.

But they do not stop there. Having found as they suppose, that the greater their sorrow and pain the greater their exaggeration,—they conclude that the reverse of the proposition is

equally true ; and of course that the greater the exaggeration short of absolute nonsense, in the language of one apparently suffering under pain or sorrow, the greater is that pain or sorrow. But this we have already shown to be false, by the same example. Great outcries are never much heeded.

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THE DRAMA---NO. II.

THEY who insist upon poetry for the stage, depend greatly upon the Bible. They refer to the lamentations of a prophet, the poetry of Job, the psalms of David.

By this we see plainly what they would have. They would have the heroes of the drama talk a language that few are able to understand, fewer to enjoy; a language that is never unpremeditated, nor ever spoken while the heart of the speaker is in travail, though it may be written with ease. But who was ever able to *write* poetry, under such bereavement and humiliation as are the subjects of tragedy? What should we think of Hamlet, or Macbeth, or Lear, if they were to *write* poetry upon the stage, or any where else indeed? And yet, upon the stage they are made to do that which is more difficult; they are made to *talk* poetry, without preparation.

We may read the great passages of Job with profound sorrow and amazement. We may feel as if a thousand trumpets were blowing in our ears; yet what should we say of a man, who in such a situation as that of Job, should actually *talk* the language of Job; not *write* the language, for that he might be able to do, under the suffering of memory, if he were ever able to write at all—but what should we say to hear him pour it forth in spontaneous and unpremeditated conversation?

Should we believe that the winds which had fallen upon the four corners of his habitation—the enemy and the fire—had very materially disturbed either his faculties or his memory?

Bear in mind that our enjoyment at a dramatic exhibition depends, not upon recitation, description or narrative, so much as upon *acting*: that we often hear very little of the language—and the least perhaps, when we are most affected, and are able to remember nothing of it; that we may be agitated or alarmed by looking at one, either on or off the stage, whose countenance and tones are agitated or alarmed, although we neither hear nor understand one word of the language in which he speaks.

If it were not so; if we were to be satisfied with magnificent declamation upon the stage, why then there could be no better place than the stage for magnificent poetry.

We should never be offended, for example, at hearing the great passages of Job *recited*; but what would be our feelings were they *acted*? With some nations these things are common;* but then, with every nation it is found expedient, if they do introduce the characters of scripture upon the stage, to give them another language than that of the scriptures. The sacred dramas of Mrs. Hannah Moore may be cited as an example.

We may endure poetry in description, which we could not abide in dialogue or narrative; and yet we may endure a much greater quantity in narrative than we could in conversation.

Poetry is like wit. When very fine, we suspect it to have been premeditated; and if too fine for the occasion—if, in fact, there be the least suspicion that it was not entirely spontaneous, we are displeased with it, just in proportion as it is beautiful and brilliant; because the more beautiful and brilliant, the more unnatural it is, and the less likely to have happened accidentally.

A certain degree of passion or suffering will betray itself, and excite a certain degree of sympathy, by exaggeration. But we

* The French, and the Catholics of Europe generally, are given to the representation of scriptural scenes upon the theatre. They have a new opera called *Moïse* (Moses) and the Descent of the Holy Ghost, with Cherubim and Seraphim, are familiar things, not only in theatres but in churches there.

are all by nature so exceedingly watchful and jealous of this very exaggeration, that after a time it excites neither pity nor sympathy, but in some cases only contempt or resentment.

Instead of believing therefore, as people who write tragedies would appear to believe, that the greater the exaggeration, the greater is the suffering of a person, *we* have come to believe directly the reverse. A child meets with some accident. We hear it sobbing, and are greatly distressed : but if he makes a prodigious outcry, we are inclined, instead of caressing or soothing him, to apply the birch. Nay—if we hear his voice pretty distinctly and violently, after a fall, it is a relief to us. We know he cannot be much hurt.

So too, if a man that is betrayed or insulted, shows a certain degree of exasperation, we feel a respect for him ; and if we ourselves have any concern with the matter, some fear of the consequences ; particularly if he runs a little into hyperbole and exaggeration, while retaliating upon us. But if he becomes very outrageous—if he talks absolute poetry, like Pistol, we take it for granted that there would be very little risk in pulling his nose.

We pardon a violent exclamation, or an extravagant appeal to our sympathy, in one who is taken by surprise, though not much afflicted. We take it for granted, if there is a great uproar, that something unpleasant has happened—though not much. People who are much hurt, are silent ; or at any rate, not much given to poetry. Those who are the most clamorous in their sorrow are the soonest quieted. The widow or the maid, who should make much fuss under any visitation, would be easily comforted ; and instead of moving the sympathy of people, would only move their ridicule or suspicion.

A cry, or a broken word or two—or a dead silence, may tell the story of her, who is mortally afflicted, hurt, or humbled. Much crying, a good many words, particularly if they are poetical words, are always reckoned a favourable symptom ; and very few persons, we are inclined to say, would offer to help a woman, though she had dropped from the skies, if she were to cry out in a very flowery style.

But we need not dwell any longer upon this. The truth is, that every passion of the human heart, every feeling, every emotion thereof, may be estimated by the simplicity and clearness of the language in which it is expressed. It is retiring and unaffected, in proportion as it is deep and sincere.

Is it not exceedingly important, therefore, that men who appear before us on the stage, to make us believe that they are dying of a broken heart, or ready to give up the ghost under some overwhelming dispensation of providence, should tell their story with all possible simplicity and clearness ?

And if so, is it not of unspeakable importance that language, unlike the language of poetry, but like that of real life, should be put into the mouths of at least nine characters out of ten that appear upon the stage?

Poetry is all very well in its place; and so is rhetoric. But both are out of place on the stage,* whenever they are given to persons who are supposed to speak without premeditation, under the influence of strong feeling.

It may be very well in passages, where from the situation of the speaker, we may suppose him to be prepared. If a poet should be called upon to recite his verses upon the stage, or an orator to declaim a speech previously committed to memory, we might be gratified with what would be exceedingly absurd, if it were passed off as extempore, or if no time were allowed for preparation.

So with a public speaker. We know very well that a man who might make an eloquent speech in behalf of another, would be likely to make but a very poor one for himself. Hence, we distrust the prompt, rich eloquence of a man who pretends to feel deeply. We know that deep feeling is a disqualification for public speaking; nay even for conversation. Not only are there no beautiful words, but there is no beautiful thought in the language of one whose heart is full. Hence is it, that when the imagination of a man is heated and exasperated into brilliancy, and when his nobler faculties have been conjured up into transcendent exertion for the defence of outraged humanity—we find that the more he feels, the more unintelligible he is; and that the more beautiful and correct his language, and the more harmonious and poetical the arrangement, the less he is believed to feel even by the multitude. If they are moved, it is with the language and voice, not with the feeling or sincerity of the orator, who deals in lofty or beautiful words.

Was there any poetry in the speech of Robert Emmett? No. Was there any rhetoric? No. He was neither a poet nor an orator; he was no declaimer, no rhetorician. He said what he had to say, with two or three exceptions, in the plainest and freest and most intelligible language. Had he been pleading for another, would he have done the same? No. He had the heart and soul of an Irishman; he would therefore have made his argument a poetical speech, a sounding and fiery oration, if he had not been wholly incapacitated by the sincerity and depth of his feeling.

* La Motte regards poetry as a formal custom invented to ease the memory, to which habit alone gives a charm. Voltaire combats him in the preface to *Marianne*, published in 1724.

But when a dramatic writer introduces a piece of untimely poetry into the language of a human being under affliction, the evil does not stop with him. No matter where it may happen; though under the excitement of composition, he should put a delightful or amazing poem into the speech of a dying hero—bound, if you please, upon the wheel, or addressing a great populace—himself a plain, straight-forward soldier, like Pierre;—however absurd it may be in the author, it is quite sure to be made a thousand times more absurd by the actor, when he comes to the passage. Nothing would tempt him to slur it over, though he were absolutely at the last gasp; he *outs* with all his strength, and gives it with due emphasis, if not with due discretion.

What actor, for example, with a rich powerful voice, had ever the self-denial to forego that passage in Macbeth, where he talks about naked new-born babes, &c. &c. &c.—‘pleading trumpet-tongued’ against him: or that where he tells lady Macbeth how the word amen had “st—st—st—*stuck* in his throat”?(1).

Such opportunities are never to be lost: and so the actor always makes it a point, when he comes to the words ‘trumpet-tongued,’ to make a noise as much like a trumpet as possible,(2) though he is in that situation, where, if the character were to say any thing, it would undoubtedly be said in a very low voice. But no—the author has given him a speech to make, with a certain quantity of poetry in it; and it is a part of the player’s contract to make the most of the speech—and the poetry.

And therefore, in the case above, where Macbeth is telling what is past—not acting it; where he is only describing what he had already felt, and of course overcome in a degree, or he would never try to *describe* it; while he is only relating the effect upon himself, not imitating it, nor representing it—Mr. Keane is obliging enough to grow black in the face, to the inexpressible delight of the multitude, (who are exquisite judges of propriety) in the way of illustration.

And this is what is called *making a point* (3)—and so too where the voice of the actor, when he is telling about the ‘shard-born beetle, with his drowsy hum;’ or about the ‘buzzing night-fly,’ is hardly to be distinguished from the drowsy hum of the one, or the buzzing of the other—it is called ‘*very fine*.’ But why? Is it because that echo of the sound to the sense, of which Mr. Pope used now and then to furnish us with a charming example, is really perceived by the audience? or properly illustrated at

(1) Mr. Keane.

(2) Mr. Cooper.

(3) Other cases might be mentioned; but all who have seen this actor in his celebrated Sir Giles Overreach, well remember the passage where he is moved as the moon is, when wolves do *whine* and *howl* at her, which Mr. K. howls out with a desolate and protracted whine.

such a time, by a king or a murderer so talking to himself? No—nothing of this. The multitude never heard of Mr. Pope's doctrine; they care not a farthing about the character. They only perceive that the actor has made a *new point*; and that satisfies them.

I know people who are in the habit of reciting the Ode to the Passions, which though every body has had the spoiling of it, for the last half century, is even yet a new thing to all that hear it, precisely as if they had undertaken to play the characters. No—I am wrong—I have never heard it *recited* at all. Every body that I have ever seen attempt it (and I have had the misfortune to see several very celebrated performers, male and female, in the part) has, instead of reciting or declaiming it, only acted it: and I have known more than one lecturer on elocution *act* such pieces of poetry as '*Erin go brah*,' and '*Hohentinden*.' (4)

Nothing is more absurd. Such things are the vulgar expedients of a vulgar story-teller. Men may be surprised at them; they may even remember and imitate them; but they are never affected by them. They all know, when they come to think of it, that the acting of narrative is the perfection of absurdity: and when they see young Norval fighting 'all his battles o'er again' before Lord Randolph; or acting the combat between the Hermit and his brother; the 'rude and boisterous captain of the sea,' they feel that which they have no language to express—a sort of dissatisfaction, which they do not know the cause of. (5)

And so too when they see such a player as Keane condescending to play tricks with lady Anne; making faces at the audience the while—not as if the actor were king Richard, but as if king Richard were an actor,—their admiration is of a piece with that which they feel, when they see a man twirling on his head; or a clown humbugged by a conjurer at a fair.

In such a case, I cannot imagine a more suitable, and at the same time a more severe trial of the actor, than for the auditor to shut his eyes, and imagine for a moment, that he sees Mr. Keane at a rehearsal, teaching a new lady Anne her 'business' in the part—alternately lifting the sword and letting it fall at every change of his voice.

Knowing this disposition of the poets to put in poetry where it has no business; and the disposition of actors to make the most of it when it has been put in, though at the expense of all keeping and propriety, until a play becomes nothing better than a series of clap-traps for recitation, our writers, if they hope to be distinguished for *truth*, will avoid poetry wherever the characters are much in earnest.

(4) Dr. Mason, of New-York, used to *act* the interview between the publican and the sinner.

(5) Quin is laughed at by Smollet, in Roderick Random, for *acting* narrative.

But, in confirmation of the preceding doctrines on the subject of simplicity and plainness of speech, I would refer to the most *effectual*—I do not say to the most *wonderful*—passages of Shakspeare : I would appeal to those, where the emotion which is felt by the auditor, contributes to the promotion of the author's whole plan ; not certainly to those, where in consequence of the prodigious elevation or splendour of thought, the propriety or impropriety of it in that place, at that time, is never made a question of ; and where the emotion which is excited, however exulting and uncontrollable it may be—though the heart of the auditor throb to bursting—does *not* contribute to the promotion of the author's whole design.

I contend that the poetry of Shakspeare—that which people call poetry—the magnificent picturing of the imagination, is about as much out of place, wherever we see it in his dramas, as a quantity of brilliant and beautiful fire-works would be, if they were let off in the middle of Lear, while the bright thunder is breaking about him ; and to the full as absurd as a poetical description of heaven would be, by the ' foolish fond old man,' declaring it to be a transparent fiery vault, with the angels and archangels at their employment ; and I contend moreover that those passages which are the most effectual, *are altogether destitute of poetry.*

But Shakspeare was like other poets. He could never resist the temptation of saying a wonderful or a witty thing, whenever or wherever it occurred to him—sometimes without the trouble of making an occasion for it : and so evident is this, that most of those brilliant and extraordinary passages, of which people have a right to complain, appear to have been a sort of after-thought, or interlineation, put in long after the original had been struck off ; not the involuntary illustration of his heated fancy at the time.

When he had a certain number of superficial feet to cover with tribute, Shakspeare himself was a good deal in the habit of beating out his lumps of solid, rough ore into leaf-gold ; and not unfrequently of counterfeiting his own coinage—working treason therefore against his own prerogative.

But a passage or two from his plays will be the best illustration of this truth ; although it cannot be denied that Shakspeare may be quoted even as the scriptures are, for almost any thing ; they against themselves apparently, and he against himself.

Here we have Macbeth crying out, in the convulsion of his heart, after the murder of Duncan, whom he had just left—

‘ Here lay Duncan !
His silver skin laced with his golden blood.’

Now commentators may seek to justify this kind of poetry as they will; they may say what they please about the profound wisdom, sagacity, and miraculous knowledge of the human heart, discoverable in such passages as this. It is all—every such defence—nothing better than profanation to the memory of Shakspeare. Were he alive, he would scorch them to ashes for their pains. They tell you, for example, that in this very passage, Macbeth is made to talk in eternal antithesis and metaphor—*because* he is a murderer. They do not say this in so many words, but such is the substance of what they say.

But, if this is true, how happens it that Macduff and the others all talk in the same way? Perhaps it may be because they are *not* murderers.

For my own part, I am ready to say, without mincing the matter at all (and I should like to see the man who has more veneration for Shakspeare than I have), I am willing to say that such passages are absolute nonsense; and that all such poetry is the most inexcusable of Shakspeare's faults and follies. (6)

Show me, I would say, one single example of what is called poetry, in the language of any human being at such a time—whether it be natural or affected—and I will give up the point forever. But, until then, I shall continue to regard these aberrations of Shakspeare, as aberrations indeed from the great path of his brightness.

(6) Is it not a little extraordinary, by the way, that after all their plotting, wisdom and preparation, the crafty and bold lady Macbeth, assisted by the invention of her husband, should be able to get up no better story than she did, to account for the murder of Duncan? Of the two, is it not more *probable* that the two favourite grooms of a king, in whose fidelity he had such confidence, that he appointed them to guard him while he slept, *did* murder him; and that having done that, they did go and 'smear' their own hands, weapons and faces with his blood: and lie down quietly in their usual place, at the door of the king's chamber, and fall asleep? Is not even this monstrous absurdity more *probable*,—than that such a story should be prepared at such a time—for such a purpose—and by such people; or by any human creature indeed above the capacity of a natural fool? Is it not of the two, more easy to believe that such a thing as the first really did take place, than that such a woman as lady Macbeth, and such a man as her husband, should have invented so foolish a tale; and that Macduff, all awake and alive as he was from the first, should never have taken any notice of it, either at the time or afterwards? If Johnson or Warburton had observed the blunder, they would have undoubtedly argued something in this way. The murderers were so disturbed in their faculties, that they could not contrive a tolerable story: Or—the amazing depth, sagacity and knowledge of the human heart here shown by the bard, can never be sufficiently admired. Macbeth and his wife construct a story which nobody would ever believe them fools enough to *invent*—especially if they were the real murderers.

In King John too, Hubert is allowed to put the prince to death in one part of the story; in another to burn out his good-looking eyes, for no reason under heaven, it would appear, unless to gratify the mob, who in that day enjoyed the putting out of old Kent's eyes in Lear. I mention this to show, in passing, how strangely insensible we are to the faults of a great man—even while we sit in judgment upon them as commentators and critics.

It would be easy to cite a multitude of other illustrations on this point from Shakspeare ; but I shall content myself with two or three of the most beautiful and touching passages of Lear—that most natural and affecting of Shakspeare's dramas. I would begin with that, where the old monarch, entirely overcome by the voice of natural affection—his heart which had withstood the buffeting of the storm, from within and without, like something impregnable, yielding all at once to the sound of gentleness and compassion—turns to Cordelia, and says to *her*(7)—

‘ If you have poison for me, I will drink it :’

and that, where he falls down at the feet of his unnatural daughter, and says—

‘ I do confess that I am old—
Age is unnecessary’—

And that, where at the first approach of poor Tom, whose piti-

(7) To *her*, I say—and not, as Mr. Keane imagines, to an attendant. Perhaps however, Mr. Keane did not so understand the line ; and only gave it so out of his anxiety for distinction. But however that may be, it was a melancholy departure from the poet ; perhaps more melancholy than any other to be found in Mr. Keane's Richard, which is any thing but the Richard of William Shakspeare.

Mr. Keane plays the passage in Lear which I have cited, not like the royal father, so unaccustomed to pity, that he is willing to die by any hand, take any thing, even poison, from any hand that will deal gently with him ; so unused to the accent of kindness ; so ‘ mightily abused,’ that he is ready to lay down his old white head at the bidding of his child, and never lift it up again, if such be her command, only because that child had borne herself affectionately toward him. No—Mr. Keane did not play that part of the character in such a natural fashion : he would not even look at Cordelia, nor address the words to her. He turned to the attendant, and said to *him*—

‘ If you have poison for me, I will drink it.’

I mention this with some emphasis, because there were disclosures of such amazing power and beauty ; so affecting and so extraordinary, in Mr. Keane's representation of Lear, that every fault became tenfold more offensive by comparison.

In a common case, it might be very well for a father to turn round rejoicingly to his tyrants, and tell them that he was ready to take poison from their hands, now that he had found his child ; but in Lear, it would be otherwise. It would prove that he did not feel very sensibly the restoration of his daughter ; since he was able, new as the sight of her face was to him, in the paroxysm of his joy, to take off his eyes from it ; and to turn away his head, not that he might conceal his tears, but that he might express his thankfulness like a taunt ; his resignation like a sneer, toward an attendant.

In a common case too, there might be in the submissiveness of a father at such a time, something, which if well expressed by such a man as Mr. Keane, would be very affecting. But then the submissiveness of the kingly old Lear, would be a thousand times more awful at such a time. It would resemble that which he shows when he prostrates himself at the feet of his bad children ; or that, where he tells the beloved one, that he is ‘ mightily abused,’ and beseeches them all not to trifle with his infirmities.

able distraction moves even the mad Lear to expostulate with heaven, he turns toward him and demands—

—if he had daughters too?

These passages, and a multitude of others, equally simple, and equally affecting, I would put in comparison with any of those which are thought poetical; such, by the way, as that soliloquy of Macbeth, which begins after this fashion—

‘If ’twere done, when *tis* done, then ’twere well :’

—a piece of dramatic writing, with reverence be it spoken, which I take to contain within itself more intrepid nonsense, which is universally mistaken for beauty; and more peculiar power, which is as universally misunderstood, or overlooked, not only by critics and commentators (in whom such a thing would be excusable) but by tragedians of plain common-sense, than any other piece of composition of the same length in this or any other language. (8)

Yes—we have one particular thought in that very soliloquy, notwithstanding the absurdity of the beginning, and the outrageous poetry of the conclusion; one single thought, which properly used by the player, would be more effectual than any other whole speech or scene of the play—I would not even except the dagger-scene itself.

There are those who tremble even to approach the transgressions of Shakspeare. I *love* them the better for it; though at the same time I thank heaven that I am not of their number. I would have no idol that could not bear the most searching investigation—the sharpest knife and the fiercest fire—none that would not bear without shrinking, to have a thousand infirmities probed and laid open; sure that were they multiplied into each other a thousand times over, he would still be the idol of those who doat on him because of his humanity; because he is *not* perfect; and because of their conviction that he was, after all, even like themselves, a man made up of earth and fire—compounded only in different proportions.

But, before we take up this part of the speech, let us reflect upon certain movements of the human heart, with which we are all in a greater or less degree familiar.

- (8) If ’twere done when *’tis* done, says Cooper;
If ’twere done *when* ’tis done, says Macready;
If ’twere *done*—when ’tis done, says Young;
If ’twere done *when—*’tis done, says C. Kemble;

Yet Shakspeare, if he meant any thing, probably meant this. If ’twere done—that is, if we do it at all—*then* ’twere well ’twere done quickly.

We know that when a man is about doing a great crime, there is a certain degree of preparation to go through with.

No person ever had the heart, on the first thought of guilt, whoever he might be, to come up to the subject at once, and look it boldly in the face, like a man. He who is meditating a murder for the first time, will never approach the deed, nor the victim, nor the place by name, till he has become hardened or desperate with reflection. He will begin afar off; and tamper with himself about the advantage of sin—and of sin generally, instead of the particular sin. By and by he comes nearer to the point. He begins to toy with himself about this or that particular sin—the taking away of another's life, under this or that pretence; and so on, gradually, step by step, precisely as if he were seeking to ensnare not himself, but another person; just like the wily Richard, when he is working upon him who was not 'wont to be so dull,' the cousin of Buckingham—until he has brought himself to think not only of the particular crime and place, but of the particular individual, whose destruction he has at heart. Till then, the whole affair is 'a deed without a name;' and the victim, even to the murderer's own thought, a man without a name.

Are not these remarks justified by our experience of the human heart? by all that we know of it in any way? If they are, let us apply them to the soliloquy of Macbeth.

Shakspeare has made the murderer do precisely what we have been speaking of; and yet, whoever heard an actor deliver the speech as if he so understood it? and who ever heard an expounder of Shakspeare even allude to it. Nobody.

And the reason is, because the faculties of all have been occupied for ages, in finding out the meaning of that, which never had any meaning in it—the commencement and conclusion of that soliloquy.

Men have discovered a deal of morality in that identical speech, although Macbeth says that if he can succeed *here*, he cares nothing about hereafter, but is ready and willing to 'jump the life to come.'

Men have discovered the surprising sagacity, and all the preternatural instinct of Shakspeare's peculiar mind, in the confusion of thought, and superb nonsense, apparent in parts of that same soliloquy.

Men have declared that the overpowering poetry of the conclusion is without a parallel in any language (in which opinion I heartily concur); and yet have they all—every one of them to a man—continued to overlook the nature of Macbeth's approach to the deed of blood—in the solitude of his own thought—as if it were a lion in his way.

He first looks at the question afar off, cautiously, and with averted face. He trembles. He dares not even *think* of a murder; for a long time he cannot bring himself to think the *name* of the king. He merely alludes to him, in the first attempt, in a very distant way. By and by he becomes more bold, and thinks of him directly: But how? Not even yet by name—not even yet as ‘the king;’ but after a very strange fashion—abruptly—as if he were afraid of being overheard: and what is yet more remarkable, the very first time he mentions him, he does it by a pronoun, as if he had mentioned his name before. He exclaims, as it were by a great effort—‘*He* is here in double trust.’

But who is *he*? Macbeth has not mentioned the name of any body yet. Still however, it is one great point gained, that he has been able to say *he*. To be satisfied of the truth and solidity of this, we need not see a murderer preparing for the work of death—a woman in love for the first time will do. Observe how she brings herself, step by step, toward the articulation of her lover’s name. From the moment she is able to look him in the face, or to say *he* without flinching from herself, she is very much in the situation of Macbeth; who, having pronounced the words,

————— ‘*He* is here in double trust,’

at the very next effort, has the courage to put his hand upon the anointed head of the old man, without faltering or trembling; to speak of him actually by his name—to call him ‘*Duncan*.’

Having done that, his guilt is nearly consummated. He has overcome the awful apprehension which keeps the murderer from looking into the face of his intended victim: he has overleaped that barrier, which kept him as it were from absolute contact with an old man’s blood—the countenance of royalty in death.

From that moment, having named the name of his victim and looked into his face, he is a murderer and a regicide. Old age and the kingly office; relationship and gratitude; compassion, allegiance and humanity, are all trampled under foot forever. And to do all this were easier for Macbeth, by the time that he has ended the soliloquy, than it would have been for him when he began it—to say these few words to himself—‘This night I shall put Duncan, the king, to death.’

VICISSITUDES IN THE LIFE OF AN ACTOR.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

“ 'Tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis 'tis true.”

I WAS born in Dublin, in which city my father was an eminent solicitor; and I received in common with my brothers and sisters a liberal education, under the superintendence of kind and affectionate parents. Of my infancy and boyhood, I have nothing remarkable to relate, for they passed away, as they generally do, in happiness rarely equalled in after-life. I cannot recollect any propensity of my boyhood, indicative of the wandering and unsettled disposition, which afterwards distinguished me; on the contrary, I was a steady plodding lad, and the only peculiarity of my boyhood which bears at all upon my story, was the predilection which at that time I felt for reading Shakspeare. Before I had numbered sixteen years, I was well read in all his plays, could quote them with readiness, and found more real pleasure in perusing them than in the amusements of boys of my own age in general. In compliance with my father's wishes, though contrary to my own, I consented to turn my attention to the law, a profession to which I had ever borne a strong dislike; and I entered his office as an articled clerk. During my clerkship the dislike with which I commenced it gradually ripened into absolute hatred; the occupation was too dull, too void of excitement for me, and at the close of each day's labour I gladly sought a refuge from the horrors of musty parchments, long briefs, and tasteless repetitions, in the delights which

were offered me by my favourite Shakspeare, and a host of poems, novels, and romances, with which the circulating library furnished me. Such a course of reading could not fail to have its effect on my mind: I fancied myself qualified, and indeed intended by nature for a nobler occupation than the petty mean business of an attorney, and in my heart I resolved to pursue it no longer than circumstances might render necessary. While in this state of mind I got intimately acquainted with some theatrical persons, through whose means I was enabled to visit the theatre; and it was not long before I imbibed the idea of making the stage my profession. Long and secretly did I cherish this idea; it became an essential part of my existence—every thing I said, every thing I did, was theatrical.

“ My mouth I scarce could open
But out there flew a figure or a trope.”

In this way matters went on until I had nearly completed my clerkship, when an event happened, which, though it for a time recalled my scattered senses, and brought me to a right feeling, yet by making me my own master at an early age proved instrumental in my subsequent ruin. It pleased Providence suddenly to deprive me of the best of fathers. He fell a victim to a typhous fever in the prime of life, after an illness of fourteen days, leaving my mother and eight children to deplore his loss.

I will not trespass on the patience of the reader by attempting to paint my grief: it was too acute to be described. Suffice it to say, that from thenceforward I resolved to banish "All trivial fond records, all petty recollections" of the dreams which had so long occupied my imagination, and turn my mind seriously to business. Alas! had my vow been as firmly kept as it was sincerely made in that moment of affliction, I should not now have the degrading task of recording my own humiliation. But how frail is poor human nature!

I entered upon my professional career under most favourable auspices, and pursued it with credit and success for upwards of two years, when a disappointment which I had not the firmness to bear, again unsettled me. I had fixed my affections upon a young lady in every respect qualified to make me happy, and I had the good fortune to be esteemed by her in return. My enthusiastic disposition led me to overlook all obstacles, I saw but the bright side of the picture, I looked for complete happiness in a union with the beloved one; and when I thought myself about to taste the o'erflowing cup of bliss, it was dashed from my lips for ever. Disappointed in the affair upon which my strongest hopes were fixed, and the prospect of attaining which had given a stimulus to my industry, and sweetened my toil, I became a wretched, careless being. I lost all steadiness, neglected my business, and dissipated my money. Tossed about by my despair, I was like a ship without a rudder; beating about at the mercy of the winds and waves, I had indeed no longer a haven to make.

My former predilection for the stage now returned, and, yielding to its influence, I determined to try my fortune in a profession for which my vanity persuaded me I had talent; besides, its nature seemed to promise me that refuge from thought I could not hope to find in the dull routine of law proceedings. Enamoured of

this hazardous project, excited by its novelty, and dazzled by fancy pictures of its advantages, I was not long in making preparation to quit the home, which to me had now lost its chief attraction.

On the morning of the 18th of June, celebrated as the anniversary of the battle of Waterloo, but to me still more remarkable as the commencement of my self-sought misfortunes, I, without any intimation to my friends, embarked on board the steam-packet, and sailed for Bristol. From thence I went to Bath with the intention of making my first attempt at the theatre in that city; but finding the season about to close, I left Bath, and proceeded to Birmingham. At the latter place the theatrical campaign had just commenced, and having a letter of introduction to the manager, I immediately waited upon him. He received me politely, but threw every possible obstacle in my way, with the view of diverting me from so foolish a project. I was not, however, easily to be deterred from the execution of the scheme I had so long fostered; and I persevered until I wrung from him a reluctant consent, that I should undertake the part of O'Donnell in *Henri Quatre* the following evening. The time for preparation was short, and I was wholly ignorant of the play; but such a trifling matter was nothing to my sanguine spirit. Having procured the part, I laboured incessantly until I had made myself master of the words set down for me. This, I thought, was all that could be necessary on my part: my genius, I conceived, would do the rest. Thus prepared, I went to the theatre on the appointed evening, saying to myself,

"This is the night,
That either makes me, or torments me quite."

I thought myself prodigiously fine when I had put on the dress laid out for me; and as I strutted before the glass I fancied I was certain of success. My heart swelled proudly as I pictured to myself the involuntary

burst of applause which must follow my first appearance, the modest elegance of my bow in acknowledgement, the rapture with which each of my speeches would be received, and the glowing columns in which the papers of the next day would paint the merits of him who was to outshine John Kemble as

"Hyperion to a satyr."

At length the glorious moment arrived; O'Donnell was called, and bold as a lion I approached the stage; but scarcely had I set my foot upon that dangerous ground, scarcely had I cast one glance upon the audience and the lights, when the few senses I had ever possessed, with one accord deserted me, and I stood before my judges a senseless image of egregious folly—

"Obstupui steteruntque comæ, et vox faucibus hæsit."

The gentleman who played Eugene, to whom my first speech should have been addressed, grasped my hand, and goodnaturedly whispered "Go on." This aroused me a little from the stupor which had seized my senses, but it was only to a consciousness of the horrors that surrounded me. I essayed to speak, but in vain; my tongue refused to perform its office. I endeavoured to move, but without success; my feet seemed riveted to the boards. How long I might have remained in this state I know not, had not a coarse voice from the gallery, echoed by twenty more, shouted "Speak up!" This gentle hint, given in the true style of "button-making breeding and Brummagem politeness," was irresistible, and I did speak, but not so as to be heard beyond the limits of the orchestra. "The gods impatient of delay" could brook suspense no longer—they had paid their money, and had a right to know what was going forward; and they entered their protest against the proceedings by a loud and general hiss. This ungentle usage excited my indignation, and I actually walked down to the footlights for the purpose of addressing

the audience; but ere I could reach the bright boundary which oil or gas had placed between the hisses and the hissed, my courage ruled me, and I wished for nothing more than a secure retreat. I was conscious of being superlatively ridiculous; this consciousness did not tend to diminish my awkwardness. All this was high fun to the gods, and they shouted with delight, while the people in the boxes tittered, and the pit shook with laughter. I now scowled with rage, and looked big, but all to no purpose; I bowed, and my signs expressed a desire to be heard, but, when silence was obtained, I could not speak, and confusion again covered me. Some called out "Fan play," "Do as you would be done by," "Hear him, hear him;" but the majority with stentorian voices shouted "Off! off! off!" Irritated and mortified, astonished and bewildered, I knew not what I did, but suffered some friendly hand to lead me, unconscious as I was, from the stage; and thus ended the first scene of my actorship. Not daunted by this disastrous commencement, I persevered throughout the play, in hopes of retrieving my forfeited honour, but still committing every kind of blunder, and experiencing the same treatment. In short, during the whole performance, I was the object alternately of laughter and hissing, of mirth and anger. At the fall of the curtain I retired from the stage, covered with shame instead of glory, with vexation and repentance. I was now perfectly satisfied of the worth of my theatrical talents, and fully resolved never more to give them a trial. In a newspaper critique which appeared the next day, I was congratulated upon the brilliant success which had crowned my efforts, and advised never to condescend in future to play any part inferior to Timeleon in the Grecian Daughter, or Fortinbras in Hamlet, characters which are merely alluded to, and never make their appearance before the audience. To avoid the repetition of this annoyance, and various jeers to which I

had subjected myself, I fled from Britain, as from a pestilential region, and took my route to London.

In London I gradually recovered from the mortification I had undergone, and my mind returned to its wonted state. I soon became capable of reviewing without pain, the circumstances of my late adventure. From this review it appeared that fair play was not allowed me, and that unkind usage had deprived me of the power of displaying those talents, which a little indulgence might have encouraged to develop themselves. Under this impression, and fanned by the breath of vanity, the flame which had been smothered, but not extinguished, again burst forth; I again became the victim of the theatrical mania. Experience had, however, taught me something, and, profiting by her lessons, I determined that in my future attempts to climb

"The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar,"

I would begin at the foot of the ladder. I therefore made diligent inquiry respecting the small theatres in the vicinity of London, and having ascertained that a company was performing at Windsor, I repaired to that town, waited upon the manager, and offered my services as a volunteer. To a country manager the offer was too tempting for refusal. Recruits such as I was, well dressed and crying gratuitously, were not every day to be met with; I was at once declared a member of the *corps dramatique*. This point being adjusted, my next care was to provide myself with a lodging, suitable to the then declining state of my purse, and I succeeded. It was certainly not such a lodging as I had been accustomed to. The sitting room was small, and merely furnished, and the bedroom was a narrow attic, in which, owing to the shape of the roof, it was impossible to stand upright, except immediately in the centre. The furniture of the dormitory was in perfect keeping with the chamber itself—it was miserable in the

extreme; and yet such was my infatuation, that though I had been from infancy accustomed to every comfort that money could procure, I was content to put up with it for the sake of being an actor.

The first part allotted to me was that of a fop in *Tom and Jerry*; and although I was dreadfully agitated, the recollection of my recent disgrace was too strong to allow me to give way to fear; I mustered resolution enough to carry me through the task—at least without being hissed. Encouraged by this negative success, and becoming familiar with the audience before me, and the other actors, I grew bolder and bolder on each succeeding attempt, and in a short time fancied myself equal to any part in the range of the drama. Amongst the many characters which I subsequently undertook, was the Irishman in "*Resina*." Of my performance in this character I was exceedingly proud, for it had elicited the rapturous applause of a "regiment of Irish dragoons" then quartered in the town. One evening, just as I had completed my toilet for the elegant *Hibernian*, (a task which for convenience I generally fulfilled at my lodging) and when I was dressed in a tattered grey jacket, a pair of patched and greasy leather inexpressibles, old worsted stockings, darned with various colours, shoes to match, and every other article after the same character, I was informed that a gentleman wished to see me. Thinking that the visitor could be no other than one of my brother performers, come, as was the custom, to borrow some portion of my wardrobe for the evening, I desired that he should walk up. Chairs being scarce, I was sitting on the bed in the elegant attic which I have already mentioned, and in my acting attire. The door opened, and one of my most intimate friends, a young surgeon of Dublin, stood before me. I felt thunderstruck, while my friend stood at the door surveying me and my apartment with an expression of countenance, in which amazement,

indignation, and grief, seemed struggling for predominance.

"Gracious Heaven!" he at length exclaimed, "can it be? are you already reduced to this state of abject misery?" Recovering my presence of mind, I welcomed him as well as I could, and begged him to be seated while I explained to him the cause of my present appearance. I tried to persuade him that my rags were badges of honourable distinction, and that my lodging was such as actors of note had used from time immemorial. He was not to be thus satisfied, and implored me to renounce a way of life which could lead only to ruin and disgrace. He informed me, that, anxious to restore me to my friends, whose grief he painted in the most vivid colours, he had undertaken the journey to England, and had long sought me in vain, until accident discovered the place of my abode and the nature of my occupation. He said that he was commissioned by my mother to entreat that I would return to her, and that no endeavour should be spared to promote my comfort and happiness. He used every argument which friendship or reason could suggest, to induce me to abandon my folly and accompany him home. But all was in vain: I was too closely wedded to the life I had chosen, and I suffered that kind-hearted young man to leave me in anger and disgust.

With my present company of actors I passed six weeks completely to my satisfaction, for my mornings were occupied in rehearsals, my evenings in acting, and the intervals of time in study: I thought the life of an actor the most delightful in the world. My good opinion of myself was daily gaining ground, although I occasionally received some slight check, of which the following is a specimen.

I was one day reading the paper in the coffee-room of one of the principal inns, when a gentleman of fashionable appearance entered into conversation with me. After some preliminary observations he said, "What

a wretched company of actors you have here!" I answered that some of them were bad enough, and inquired if he had been at the theatre the preceding night. "Oh! yes," said he, "and I have had enough of it." "Pray, Sir," inquired I, "what did you think of the tall thin young man, who wore a brown frock coat and white trousers?" "Think of him!" exclaimed he, "why, Sir, his was the most miserable attempt at acting I have ever witnessed. I would recommend the manager to employ him in future in trimming the lamps." "Sir," said I, rising and bowing, "I thank you for your good wishes. I am the individual of whom you are pleased to express yourself in such flattering terms. Good morning, Sir!"—and I walked out of the room with no very exalted opinion of the stranger's discernment.

At the end of six weeks the season terminated; and the company separated each to seek or to fulfil some new engagement. I found, upon examining into the state of my finances, that my remaining stock of cash was wholly inadequate to the demands upon it, and that without a supply I could not leave the town. I therefore applied to an Israelite who dealt in jewellery, and requested him to buy my watch, which had cost me twelve guineas but a few months before. I had always regarded it as a good time-keeper, but I now discovered a thousand faults in it, which I should never have known but for the sagacity of Moses, who pointed them all out carefully solemnly assuring me that it was no worth thirty shillings: in fact, he would sell me better for the money but that, as I was in distress, he would give me forty shillings for it and take his chance of selling it to some one who might not know the value of such things. I was by no means satisfied with this offer, and was about to leave the shop, when he made an advance of five shillings to which he gradually made addition until his offer reached three pounds and there he protested his conscience

obliged him to stop. *My* conscience, however, would not allow me to take this sum, chiefly because it was not equal to my purposes, and I left the shop in distress, when the Jew followed me and said that rather than let me be annoyed he would give me three pounds ten shillings. At last declaring it was robbing himself and his heirs, he gave me four pounds. With the money thus raised, I paid my debts, and got to London, with a little experience and half a crown in money. I had scarcely alighted from the coach, when I was accosted by one of my fellow performers at Windsor, whose name was Douglas, the *primo buffo* of the company. After the usual salutations, he inquired if I had any money. I instantly told him the extent of my purse; then said he, I humbly move that we enter into partnership, for I have eighteen pence. I could see no reasonable objection to this proposal, even though my share of the capital was the largest; and having signified my assent, we forthwith set out in quest of lodgings. After diligent search, we provided ourselves with two bedrooms in the neighbourhood of Tottenham-court-road, at the rate of nine shillings per week. One of the bedrooms being a large airy room, it was agreed that it should be used likewise as a parlour, and that I, having the largest share of the capital, should sleep in it. These preliminaries being adjusted, we resolved ourselves into a committee of supply, being fully persuaded that we could not long exist upon four shillings, and it was determined that each should apply to his friends for assistance, and that in the mean time Douglas' watch should be pawned for our present exigencies. This was no sooner resolved upon than executed; letters were written, and we sat down as happy as princes to a good beefsteak and a quart of Barclay, Perkins and Co. For a fortnight all went on comfortably, and we busied ourselves looking out for engagements; but even thirty shillings could not last for ever, and in

spite of our endeavours the last shilling made its appearance without our receiving any intelligence from home. The consideration of the solitary shilling sank my spirits to the lowest ebb; I was conscious of having forfeited all claim to the assistance of my family; I saw no prospect of employment, and I knew not which way to turn for relief. One morning after Douglas had gone out, the servant girl brought me something carefully wrapped up in paper, which she said she had found in his bed. It felt so very like money that I could not resist the temptation of examining it; and opening the parcel I found ten shillings. True to the character and thrift of a Scotchman, he had provided for a rainy day, which, he afterwards told me, judging from my disposition, he saw would not fail soon to visit us. When he came home, I was half inclined to be offended with him for deceiving me, but could not really feel angry, so much was I pleased with the possession of the money. For a time this supply cheered us, but it was soon exhausted. "Now, indeed," cried I, "we are likely to starve!" but scarcely had I pronounced the words when the loud knock of the twopenny postman made me start from my chair. "Whom can this be for?" said I. The entrance of the girl with a letter for me put an end to our doubt. Eagerly I broke the seal, and found that it was from a stranger, informing me that if I would call upon him the next day, he could offer me an engagement for the Cheltenham theatre. "Now," exclaimed I, exultingly, "this is as it should be; my name has already reached Cheltenham, the gay, fashionable and elegant Cheltenham; and I am offered an engagement for that place. Well, let Cynics scoff as they will, merit is sure to be rewarded."

I was so overjoyed that I could think of nothing but Cheltenham. I got a map and traced out the journey, fancying myself already on the road. Next morning I was punctual

to my appointment, saw the gentleman who had written to me, and concluded an engagement for the remainder of the Cheltenham season, then about eight weeks, at the handsome salary of twenty-five shillings per week, for which I agreed to make myself generally useful, that is to say, to play any part allotted me, however degrading or disagreeable.

"Oh! what a fall was there my countrymen!"

My professional earnings at home, during the two years that I was steady, were never less than six guineas a week, with every prospect of an increase, and that too in a reputable business. "*Heu mihi dolor!*" By a lucky coincidence, the very next post brought me a letter from home, enclosing a little money. I was thus unexpectedly furnished with the means of making the journey. Leaving Douglas fifteen shillings, and reserving to myself one pound for coach fare, and five shillings for sundries, I set off the next day, and arrived at Cheltenham with about two shillings in my purse.

At Cheltenham, however, the shallowness of my purse did not signify, and having procured a lodging at four shillings per week, I easily contrived to get credit for eatables and drinkables until the ensuing Saturday, when I received my salary, the first I had ever earned by my theatrical exertions. My first appearance on the Cheltenham boards was in the important part of the Sheriff in *Henry the Fourth*, in which play the well known amateur Colonel Berkeley played the Prince, and his brother Augustus, Falstaff. I had therefore a claim on the acquaintance of the Colonel similar to that of the man on the ominent actor whom he reminded that he had played the Cock to his **Ghost** in *Hamlet*. I thought then and still think the Colonel a good amateur actor, and the best stage-manager I ever saw, for I never met any other man who to a knowledge of his business added such persevering industry and zeal. I well remember that the play of *Henry*

the Fourth, under his direction, underwent sixteen rehearsals, which I, having only six lines to speak, thought a great bore. The good effect of this drilling was evident when the play came to be acted, for every one was to the letter perfect, and even I had the good fortune to get through without stumbling.

Having thus made my ground sure, I bethought me of my friend Douglas, and so glowingly did I represent his qualifications to the manager, that I procured him an engagement as singer, at the salary of two pounds per week. Upon this engagement he came to Cheltenham, and a second room being to let in the house where I lodged, we again became messmates. In the Cheltenham theatre, I played a variety of parts without any marked disgrace, a fact which I now attribute to the urbanity of the audience, for I am well assured that I was far from being tolerable as an actor. However, as I did not think so then, my apparent success was pleasing to my vanity, and I was on excellent terms with myself. I passed my time very agreeably, for Douglas having hired a piano for the purpose of practising, our lodging became the rendezvous of all the musical men of the theatre, who usually every non-play night assembled there, and sang glees and duets. I contributed to the harmony in the only way I could, by mixing whisky-punch after the true Hibernian style. Such gay living was, however, so unsuited to my means, that at the end of the season, when it became necessary to depart, I was without a shilling. In this dilemma the prudent Scot again befriended me, for he had saved three pounds, and to his thrifty conduct I was indebted for the means of reaching London.

We arrived in town, wearied, dispirited and cold, late in the evening of one of the damp chilly days in the middle of November. We could muster but five or six shillings in our joint purse, and were not provided with a lodging; it was then too late to seek one, and it became absolute-

ly necessary to put up for that night at a hotel. We accordingly stopped at a respectable house in Oxford-street, resolving to make ourselves comfortable, and trusting to Providence to send us the means of paying the bill in the morning. Accordingly, we had a good supper, of which we stood much in need; and having qualified it with a glass or two of brandy and water, we retired to rest, and slept as soundly, perhaps more soundly, than if we had been possessed of ten thousand pounds. After breakfast next day we held a consultation upon raising money to discharge our bill, and we agreed each should go in search of his acquaintances and endeavour to borrow a trifle, and meet at the hotel at the dinner-hour. When we met however, the length of our faces too plainly told our disappointment. We had returned as we set out, expecting that each of us had acquired an enormous appetite. To satisfy our hunger we ordered a beefsteak; and having disposed of that and a glass to cheer our spirits, we came to the conclusion, that by so much had our expenses been increased while our funds continued unimproved. Pondering over the means of extrication, an expedient occurred to me, which, however unpleasant, I determined to carry into execution. I had some good clothes, and there was a pawnbroker in the neighbourhood. The great difficulty was to get the clothes out of the house unobserved; but that difficulty was soon removed. Having communicated my plan to Douglas, we went up stairs to my bed-room, where I took from my trunk four good coats, which I folded separately, while he passed a silk handkerchief round and secured them to my body. I then put on my travelling cloak, which being very large, completely concealed the cargo with which I had loaded myself, and a slight appearance of corpulency was all which could be perceived. Thus prepared I sent Douglas forth to see that the

coast was clear; and following him with cautious steps, I had descended one flight of the stairs when one of the waiters was seen coming up. In a moment I was in my room again, and when there I had some difficulty to prevent myself from fainting, so overcome was I with terror; for had I been detected I must have appeared like a thief. The coast being pronounced clear again I made a second attempt, and luckily got out of the house without farther interruption. When in the street I almost flew until I reached the three balls; and entering at the friendly door, above which was written "Money lent," I joyfully deposited my burthen on the counter. The money raised by this expedient was two pounds. Happy in possessing the cash, I returned to the hotel in lighter spirits than I had enjoyed for some days.

We next took a lodging in an obscure street close to Leicester-square, paid our bill at the hotel, and removed our luggage to our new quarters, consisting of two bed-rooms. Here we remained many weeks in a most deplorable state of poverty, frequently having no other meal than tea in the morning and evening; sometimes, through accident or the kindness of an acquaintance, we got a good dinner; but more frequently a walk in the Regent's Park, or a peep at the print-shops, was its substitute. At the close of each week I was obliged to pawn an article of clothing in order to pay the rent, and by these means my wardrobe rapidly diminished. At length I mustered resolution and wrote my mother a penitent letter, which procured me five pounds; and Douglas having at the same time succeeded in making an engagement for the Exeter theatre, I divided the money with him after paying some arrears of rent. He left town promising me a remittance as soon as possible. Having some hope of obtaining employment at the Greenwich Theatre, I went to that place and remained a fortnight in fruitless expectation. At the end of that period I returned to

London, my money was exhausted, and I was compelled to have recourse again to a hotel in order to avoid actual starvation. I accordingly took my abode at a house not far from Covent Garden. In order to raise a fund to defray my expenses, I wrote immediately to a friend in Dublin, stating my circumstances, and soliciting a trifling loan; but to that application I never received an answer; and when my bill for the first week was presented, I was obliged to beg a little indulgence on the score of being disappointed of a remittance. While at dinner one day in the coffee-room, a very dashing, elegant-looking fellow, with a huge bunch of seals and all the other appurtenances of dandyism, entered into conversation with me; and having introduced himself as a Mr. Somebody from the city, whose old dad was immensely rich, he politely invited me to take a share of a bottle of wine. I at first declined his offer; but his kindness was such that he would take no excuse, and I was obliged to comply. Flattered by his civility, and pleased with the wine, which in my low spirits was a welcome treat, I made no objection to the appearance of a second bottle, but helped to finish that also, and went to bed highly delighted with myself, my entertainer, and all the world besides. In the morning, however, I found that "all is not gold that glitters;" for my kind friend had absconded and left me to pay for two bottles of wine and an expensive decanter which he had broken. This formed a most unreasonable addition to my bill; but it gave me a useful lesson, and I was ever after more cautious of accepting such marks of kindness from strangers, particularly the race who haunt the west end of town, dressed in the pink of the mode, aping men of fashion, but really living in holes and corners. I was still in hopes of hearing from my friend, and anxiously did I watch the arrival of the postman: but day after day passed away and no letter came. Several

times my landlord reminded me that the bill was unpaid; but I contrived to put him off with the same plea, until at length his patience and his confidence in me were worn out. One evening I had an order presented me, and went to see the new pantomime at Covent Garden theatre, which was not over till twelve o'clock. On my return, feeling much exhausted, I ordered some trifle for supper; but, instead of supper, the waiter brought me a note from the landlord informing me that no farther credit could be given until my bill was paid. Stung to the soul by this indignity, and disgusted at the cruelty and meanness which could dictate a refusal at such an hour, I started from my seat, and, throwing my cloak about me, rushed into the street, resolved, even if death should be the consequence, not to pass another night under the fellow's roof. It was now the beginning of January, and the snow lay upon the ground knee-deep, and the wind was piercingly cold: but the passion which raged within my bosom and made my blood boil, rendered me insensible of external annoyance. I wandered about the streets for nearly an hour, neither knowing or caring where I went. At length the excessive cold reminded me of my situation. I looked around for some place of shelter, in vain; every house was closed, nor had I the poor consolation of a companion in misfortune; for such was the inclemency of the weather, that even the unhappy beings who usually frequent the streets at night, had retired to their miserable homes, and the watchmen had ensconced themselves snugly within their boxes, leaving

"The world to wretchedness and me."

Deeply did I now repent the folly which had led me from my comfortable home, deserting a respectable station for one which imagination had painted as happy and glorious, but which experience told me was fraught with misery and disgrace. Vainly did I call to mind the com-

forts of the cheerful fireside at home, the maternal smile which had ever welcomed me there, and the indescribable charm which presides over a domestic circle. The contrast between my past and present circumstances filled me with anguish: I had wantonly sacrificed good for evil, comfort for misery, respect for contempt; and I was now a wretched outcast, cold, hungry, penniless, and houseless, without prospect of relief for the present, or hope for the future. What might have been the consequence of these bitter reflections I dare not think, had not a merciful Providence directed my steps to the door of a hotel, where I had in better times expended considerable sums of money. A light over the door at-

tracted my attention, and re-awakened hope. "Here," thought I, "if gratitude and humanity have not together departed from the world—here I may surely expect a welcome;" and I was not mistaken. I knocked, and was admitted. A large party within had caused the inmates of the house to stay up later than usual. The landlord received me with cordiality mixed with some surprise at seeing me at such an hour: he provided me with a supper of cold meat; but so acute had been my mental affliction that I had lost my appetite; and after in vain endeavouring to eat, I retired to bed, where I lost for a time all recollection of my recent sufferings.

WALNUT STREET THEATRE.

This elegant establishment, under the present judicious management, continues to attract crowded houses.

Mr. Forrest played *Macbeth*, on Wednesday, to a brilliant and overflowing audience. This was his first performance of the part in Philadelphia, and we are gratified in saying he was very successful. If in some passages he fell below those whom we have been accustomed to see in *Macbeth*, there were others in which he amply compensated for these trifling deficiencies. The dagger scene, immediately after the murder, was powerful and imposing, and well deserved the thundering applause bestowed upon it. His haggard look—his trembling limbs—the deep but broken tones of his voice, and the involuntary recoil with which, upon first entering the hall, he shrunk from the touch of Lady Macbeth, before he was aware of her identity, were all done to the life. In the banquet scene, his acting was marked by that powerful physical energy for which he is so remarkable. Few men could have sustained the attitude into which he threw himself, upon the second vision of the ghost, so long as he did; and still fewer could have so well expressed the extreme of horror, which seemed to call every muscle of his face and neck into violent exercise.

The omission of the ghost in this scene is highly judicious, and reflects great credit upon Mr. Forrest's taste and judgment.

After the play, there was a loud and general call for Mr. Forrest, who in a short time appeared, and, in a speech of some length, expressed his thanks and gratification. Some allusions, in the course of this address, seemed to us quite injudicious, though by far the greater part of the audience received them with shouts of applause.

Mr. Hackett's benefit, on Thursday, was a bumper. The play, Bickerstaff's *Hypocrite*, was well cast, the leading performers being quite at home in their respective parts. Roberts, as *Mawworm*, if we except a little exaggeration in some scenes, made a decided hit. We like Hackett's story of *Hans Knickerbocker* extremely. The incidents of the narrative are not new, but the manner is excellent. His "yankee stories" are also finished comic pictures. We cannot say much in praise of his imitations.

Red Jacket and his blundering interpreter are not fit subjects for public exhibition.

It will be remembered that Mr. H. Wallack, for many years a favorite and leading performer at Chestnut street, takes a benefit this evening, on which occasion he will be assisted by his brother, Mr. James Wallack. We hope he may have a good house—for we know he deserves one.

Varieties.

Theatrical Alphabet.

A was an Archer, who play'd his own **ghost**;
 B was a Baker, as stiff as a post;
 C was a ———, 'tis known he can rant well;
 D was a Dowton—oh, rare Dr Cantwell!
 E was an Egerton, clever in Clytus;
 F was a Fawcett—long may he delight us!
 G was a Gattie, so glorious in Tonson;
 H was Miss Henry—I think she'll get on soon;
 I was an Isaacs, great in bluff Artabanes;
 J was a Jones, who still brisk as champagne is;
 K was a Kemble, a Winston as busy as;
 L was a Liston—Lord! what a droll phiz he has!
 M was a Mathews—show his equal, who can?
 N was poor Naldi, kill'd by a stew-pan;
 O was O'Neil, whose rise was so speedy;
 P was a Power, who mimicked Macready;
 Q was a Quin, once at Drury a dancer;
 R was J. Russell—I hope he may answer;
 S was a Stephens—may she yet draw a high lot!
 T was a Terry, superb in the Pilot;
 U was an Usher—not a clown you'll more odd see;
 V was a Vestris, once Miss Bartolozzi;
 W was a Warde, whom we see with delight—
 X was his mark; though no doubt he can write;
 Y was a Young, whom, 'tis said, they engage dear;
 And Z was Zuchelli, who'll soon be the rage here.

A few evenings ago some tradesmen met at Ward's, Commercial Hotel, North Shields, to enjoy themselves after the fatigue of the day, amongst whom were a son of Hibernia (a knight of the *last*,) and a Northumbrian (a bookbinder,) who, it appears, had kept some volumes belonging to Crispin rather an unreasonable time. The bookbinder took up a newspaper, and amongst other things read, "A book-keeper wanted;" on which Pat started upon his legs and exclaimed "and sure, friend D., I will recommend you to the situation as the best book-keeper in England."

Quick Travelling.—At a late meeting of the Brighton Mechanics' Institution, the lecturer having remarked that it would take 520,000 years for a cannon ball to reach the nearest fixed star, if shot from the guns of the battery; one of the parish headles who was present, struck with astonishment, exclaimed "Lord, Tom, when shall I get to Heaven?"

A country clergyman, who on Sundays is more indebted to his manuscript than to his memory, called unceremoniously at a cottage, while its possessor—a pious parishioner—was engaged (a daily exercise) in perusing a paragraph of the writings of an inspired Prophet. "Weel John," familiarly inquired the clerical visitant, "what's this you're about?" "I am prophesying," was the prompt reply.—"Prophesying!" exclaimed the astounded divine, "I doubt you are only reading a prophecy." "Weel," argued the religious rustic "gif reading a preachin' be *preaching*, is na reading a prophecy *prophesying*?"—*Dundee Advertiser.*

A Puff.—A very beautiful woman presented her husband, a few weeks ago, with a son and heir. Desirous of performing the office of nurse to her infant, she commenced accordingly such pleasing impulse of maternal affection; but the sources of nourishment shortly became so greatly inflamed as to occasion the mother, while suckling her child, the most acute agony. Averse to employing a wet nurse the lady, after vainly trying many alleged specifics, found finally, an effectual remedy in *Rowland's Kalydor*. and now administers, with pleasure to herself, and health to her offspring, the first aliment of infancy.

A short time ago, a man went to a tradesman's shop in this town, to purchase a box. One was shown to him, which suited in every respect except that the man thought it not large enough to hold a hat. "Not hold a hat! bless you!" said the tradesman "look there" at the same time taking his own hat off his head, putting it in the box, and shutting the lid. This perfectly satisfied the buyer, and after

some further conversation he paid for the box, and carried it off with the hat in it, the owner not recollecting the circumstance of putting it in the box until a considerable time after its being carried off—*Maidstone Gazette*.

A gentleman was complimenting Madame Denis on the manner in which she had just acted *Zara*—"To sustain it successfully," said she, "a person should be both young and handsome"—"Ah, madam!" replied the complimenter, "you are a complete proof to the contrary."

An uninformed Irishman, hearing the Sphinx alluded to in company, whispered to a friend, *Sphinx!* who's he now?" "A monster, man." Oh, a *Munster-man*; I thought he was from Connaught," replied our Irishman, determined not to seem totally unacquainted with the family.

Clerical Repartee—Charles the second playing at tennis with a dignified prebend who had struck the ball well, he exclaimed "That's a good stroke for a dean!"—"I'd give it the stroke of a bishop," said Mr. Dean, "if your Majesty pleases."

Curious Fact.—"Keep a thing seven years and you will find a use for it." So says the proverb, and the following incident, which was related to us the other night by a Greenock gentleman, affords no bad illustration of the truth of the remark. Not many years ago, a man of the name of Douglas, was tried at Inverary for some petty depredation, and sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment in Rothsay jail. But the culprit had been accustomed to a roving life, and as his new quarters by no means accorded with his ideas of comfort, the thought soon struck him that it was possible to change them.—His cell happened to be on what is called the ground-floor; and, in addition to a chair, table, and bedstead, displayed an old-fashioned rusty grate, which, for years on years, had, to all appearance, chased away no contiguous damp—emitted no cheerful blaze. From this grate he wrenched one of the ribs, or bars, and although the instrument was not above nine inches long, and one in diameter, he made so good a use of it, that in the course of a very few hours, he fairly undermined the wall of his prison. The aperture, though small, enabled him to drag his body through; but, after creeping out, he had the temerity to creep in again and, from whatever motive, secreted the disparted portion of the grate in a corner of the yawning chasm above. Afterwards he found his way to Greenock, was allowed to work his passage in a vessel bound to North America, and remained in that country several years. Tiring, however, of the new world, he revisited Scotland; and in the hope, no doubt, that both his crime and his escape had been forgotten, ventured once more among the wilds of Argyleshire. The Fiscal of the district, unaware, perhaps, of the man's return, or not deeming the matter of much importance, offered him no molestation at first; but he was soon caught in a new offence; and from necessity or oversight re-lodged in the identical cell he had broken. All the world have heard of *Monsieur Tonson's* witty tormentor; and as the first thing he did on his return from India was to ring the astounded Frenchman's bell, so our hero had no sooner been left to himself, than he began to explore the area of the chimney in quest of an old and valued acquaintance, which had served him at a pinch, and might do so again, and he found the instrument where he left it! as fit for mining work as ever, and with fewer changes on its substance or surface than time and climate had made on his own weather beaten frame. To work, therefore, he set a second time, and was again so successful, that he had his foot on the heath, and saw the sun rise on his native mountains at an early hour on the following morning. As the circumstance excited a good deal of interest, diligent search was made for the Baron Trenck of the Isle of Bute; but it was all to no purpose. He escaped to a distant part of the country, betook himself to more lawful courses, and has been heard to boast, when heated with liquor, of a brace of exploits, the reality of which can be attested by many individuals still resident in the town of Rothsay.—*Dumfries Courier*.

The celebrated scholar Muretus was taken ill upon the road as he was travelling from Paris to Lyons; and, as his appearance was not much in his favour, he was carried to an Hospital. Two physicians attended him, and his disease not being a very common one, they thought it right to try something new, and out of the usual road of practice, upon him. One of them, not knowing that their patient knew Latin, said in that language to the other, "We may surely venture to try an experiment upon the body of so mean a man as our patient." "Mean, Sir!" replied Muretus in Latin, to their astonishment, "can you pretend to call any man so, Sir, for whom the Saviour of the world did not think it beneath him to die."

A Mr. Harwood had two daughters by his first wife, the eldest of whom was married to a Mr. J. Chosick. This Chosick had a daughter by his first wife, whom old Harwood married, and by her had a son; therefore John Chosick's second wife could say as follows:—"My father is my son, and I am my mother's mother, my sister is my daughter, and I am grandmother to my brother."

French Authors.—Piron's tragedy of *Gustavus* was vehemently hissed and driven from the stage, which induced Voltaire to triumph at his failure. The latter wit soon after produced his *Zara*, and on meeting Piron exclaimed, "Well, you see I escaped without a single hiss."—"True," replied Piron, "an audience cannot hiss and yawn together."

Levity Corrected.—The English ambassador having occasion to inform Frederick the Great of a victory achieved by our soldiers, began his communication with these words. "It has pleased Divine Providence"—"What!" said the King, "is God Almighty one of our allies?"—"Yes, sire," replied the Englishman, "and the only one that demands no subsidies."

The Drama.—In any remarks which we have made, or shall hereafter make, we would not have our readers suppose that we are opposed to Theatres as such, but only to the abuse of the name. We are for letting the public be amused and entertained, and would walk a mile any time of the year to see a first rate exhibition, whether of wild or tame animals, a microscope or a Methews. But when managers, to attract a crowd, draw lotteries because there is no other attraction, and play plays which would make a virtuous woman blush, utter oaths and imprecations with all the native grace of stable boys, then we say the Theatre is not what it ought to be, and consequently should not be encouraged. We must not write a sermon when we merely intend to make manifest some of the doings which the existence of four dramatic establishments are liable to create. Rivalry there is between them all, but the spirit of accommodation, rendered necessary by very heavy expenses, and numerous difficulties which could not be foreseen in establishments of such extent, nevertheless exists, and the stage managers contrive to save expense, and to make fun as well as trouble for themselves, by borrowing and lending. What sort of things they borrow and lend may be learned from the following notes from one to another. Some samples fell by accident under our notice, and the subject passed from our memory, but as nearly as we can recollect them, they were to the following import.

Mr. ———

Dear Sir.—I have advertised Macbeth for this evening and the doors are actually now opened, and the house filling, when to my utter consternation, my two ghosts are dead drunk. Send over a couple of the best you can pick out, as I have none unemployed that could do the part, and for mercy's sake be quick or I shall be dish'd.

Yours in haste, ———.

ANSWER.

Dear Sir.—Very sorry I cannot oblige you with a regular pair of ghosts; mine are engaged this evening in filling the parts of Doge and Councillor of Venice. I send, however, the best I have—one, the tallest, has a good hatchet face, but he can't speak English—all you have to do is to hollow out from under the trap his speech, which sounds, you know, very well from a ghost. The other will speak well enough—the only fault he has is being rather too fat. My audiences, however, generally forgive these little minutiae, and I don't doubt yours will. We have a prospect to-night of a good house. ——— draws almost as well as Cooke himself.

Yours, &c. C. D.

Dear Sir—My Paul Fry in the afterpiece has bolted. He won't hear the last of it, and shall lose a month's pay—but as the play is advertised for to-morrow, and all the actors perfect, I wish to have it played, particularly after my dismal tragedy, by way of variety. If you can spare your Paul for the occasion, pray let me know.

ANSWER.

Paul is at your service, provided nine o'clock will do—if you can keep your play back till then he shall come; the audience can be amused a long half hour with two or three scrapes from the orchestra. He is yours, as well as

E. F.

REJOINDER.

Fry did his duty last night, and it was all I could expect from a member of your company. As you will want to set a good table to-night, permit me to offer you as a small return for your kindness, a new set of pitchers and drinking cups, made of the very best pasteboard and highly gilt. They are just finished, and, unlike myself, are not dry. Use them carefully, and be sure to return them to

Yours, &c. G. H.

Sir—I have engaged the Elephant, who, they say, never fails to bring full houses, as he almost fills it himself! but the horrible creature must be ridden by a lady, agreeably to the part, and I hav'n't a soul on my female list who will mount. Have you a woman who has ever been in the East India service, or who is accustomed to riding Elephants—if so, send her round. If she can't speak

it's of no great consequence, and she shall have her own terms. As ever, your obliged J. J. K.

ANSWER.

I send a lady who is used to all sorts of riding, and will do the Elephant business a *merville*. She is in my debt, so you can pay me. She has no objection to firing a gun from his back, being used to the smell of fire. Take care the clapping of the company don't frighten your beast, who will cut a queer figure dancing a hornpipe into the pit.

Salve, L. M.

Such, gentle reader, may be the correspondence of managers or stage managers—or, if you don't believe it, perhaps it may not. Those who delight in Theatrical scenes, should never view them in the broad glare of day, and perhaps you will say that we make the shifts which actors are put to, entirely too public. If that be your opinion, most valued sir, we must bid you good night, and drop the curtain.